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Series



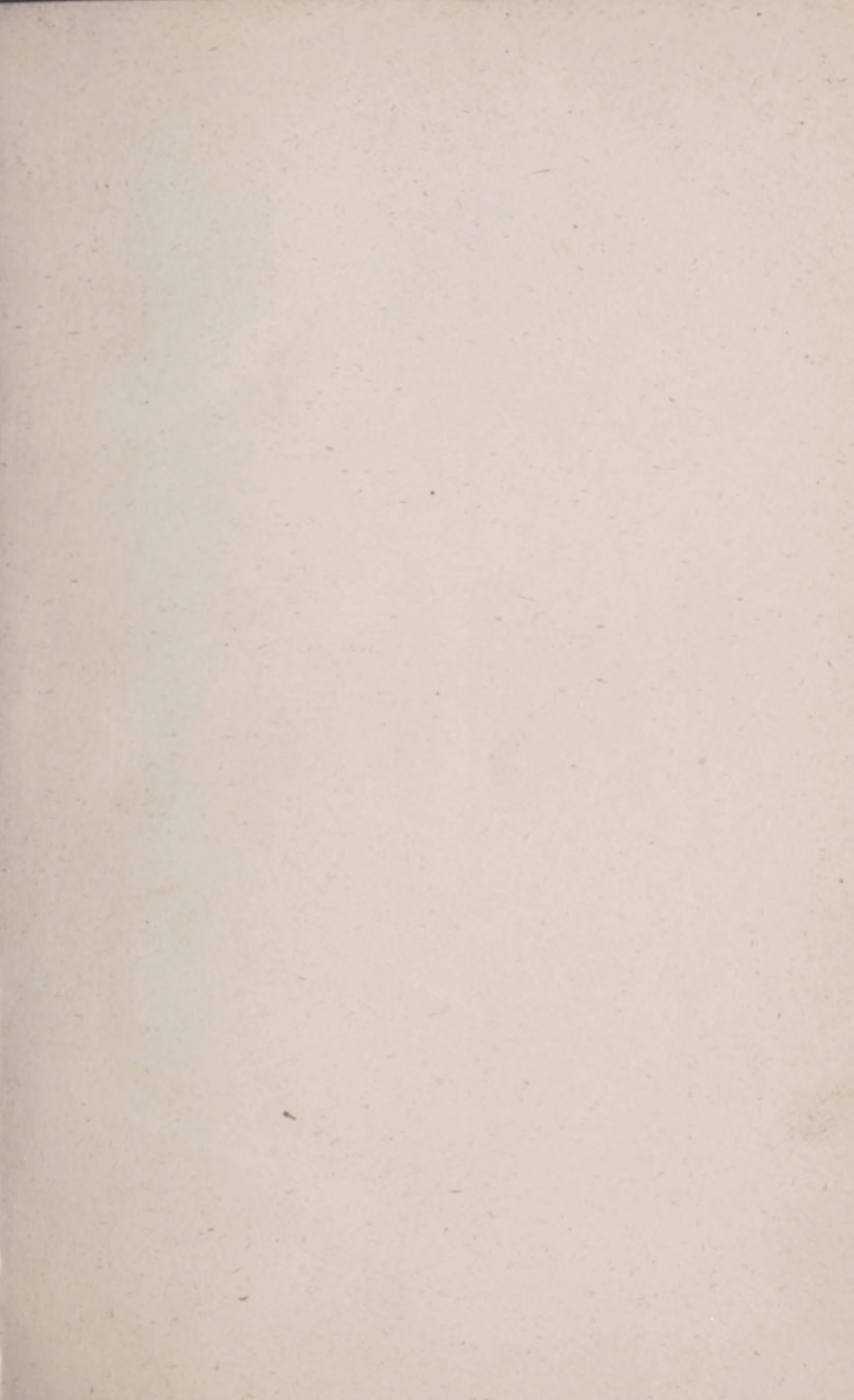
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LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS:

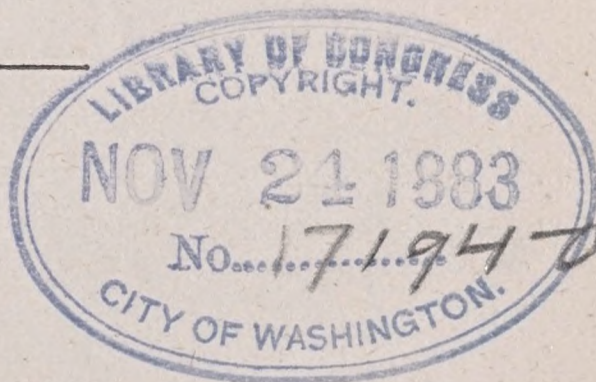
A STORY OF THE FRANCO-GERMAN WAR.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY

ALICE F. BURK.

35



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LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS.

CHAPTER I.

MY HOME.

TEN years have passed since like a rushing river the German army swept over France. Ten years! And still the terrible scenes of that war stand out as clearly before my eyes as if I had seen them yesterday.

I was at that time a girl of thirteen years, but I have seen much blood flow, have watched many eyes grow dim in death. How many tears I shed and how I trembled when the thunder of the cannon and the clash of arms sounded in my ears! Oh,

the war, the war! My heart still pulsates more quickly when I recall some of its scenes.

And yet I am impelled to write my experience in those days; for though the war has taken from me dear friends and destroyed my home, once so quiet and peaceful, yet those trials, through God's mercy, were the means of letting the light of the gospel shine into my dark heart; so that even when the thought of what I have lost comes to me it cannot make me wholly sad, for my soul enjoys a peace which I can never lose. Have I been robbed of my father, my earthly treasures? I have a Father in heaven, a home above, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. How could I complain and be desponding? No; I will lay my pain at the feet of him who can have compassion for our weakness and who takes all our cares on himself. I will trust him,

for he knows how to make all things work together for good.

Now for my story. That I am a Frenchwoman by birth the reader will have already guessed. As I write these lines how plainly I can see my dear old home! I see the scattered houses of our village, the irregularly paved streets, the gardens adorned with fruit trees, the little old gray church and the parsonage covered with ivy and honeysuckle—the cemetery, too, with its weatherbeaten gravestones and rudely-carved crosses. The whole picture bears the mark of rural simplicity. Protected on the north and east by the “Red Hills,” our village was, in the estimation of its inhabitants, who were mostly employed in the neighboring copper-mines, the most charming in the whole world. Alas that in this quiet spot the dread roar of the cannon should be heard, bringing misery and death to our happy homes!

At the end of the village was my father's house, a stately building testifying to the wealth of its former owners, but now much neglected. The large old door opening on the street, with its rusty hinges and worm-eaten supports, looked ever ready to fall. This door had been long since disused; a smaller entrance led into a court-yard partly paved, partly grown over with wild shrubs; in the middle of this space the gray stones of a crumbled wall showed where once had been a fountain. Broad stone steps led into the house, a spacious building roofed with red tiles and surmounted by an oddly-shaped cupola. Most of the rooms were uninhabited and gave to the rats and mice uncontested lodging. On the south side the terraced garden was a picture of desolation; grass, vegetables, flowers, all grew in wild luxuriance. Behind the garden a narrow path led nearly perpendicularly down to a brook whose

waters rushed over the stones of their rocky bed to seek a hiding-place in the shadow of the woods and hills that rose on each side.

How dearly I loved this place in the bright days of childhood! Now every point is linked with some sad remembrance. The house, with its stone steps and its narrow windows; the honeysuckle on the garden wall; the little bridge leading over the Arle River; the road to the Red Hills; the parsonage, with the graveyard adjoining,—all these objects I see now through a mist of tears.

Ten years ago I was a happy child. True, I had neither friends nor companions, but I did not miss them. Our household consisted, besides my father and myself, of our trusty old servant Pierre and Barbara, a faithful woman who had formerly been my nurse, but who now managed all the domestic concerns of the house. These, with two maids,

completed our little family. My father was proud of his name and lineage, but as far back as I can remember we had been in straitened circumstances. Only the good management and the strict economy of Barbara enabled us to keep up an appearance of gentility. My father had held a high position under government, but three years before the time of which I am writing he had withdrawn from business to devote himself entirely to science. He buried himself in his library, and, absorbed in his books, left to Barbara the whole care of the house. What thanks I owe my dear old nurse! When she took me—a child only eight years old—from the arms of my dying mother, it was with a firm resolve to be a mother to me and to fill the place of her departed mistress, who, as Barbara said, had not gone to purgatory, whatever the priest might say to the contrary, but direct to heaven. And,

indeed, she was always my truest friend on earth—a faithful, honest soul, though rough in manner and perhaps not prepossessing in appearance to strangers. I am looking forward to a happy meeting with her in heaven.

So the days of my childhood flowed quietly and peacefully along like a gliding brook, which, hidden under overhanging bushes, continues its placid course. Only occasionally was there any life in our old house, and that was when Stephen, a distant cousin and an orphan about three years older than I, came to visit us. Most of his childhood had been passed with us, and, now that he was in Paris preparing himself for college, I missed him greatly and rejoiced heartily when he came home—as he was in the habit of saying—for his holidays. He was a talented, bright boy, somewhat wild and mischievous, perhaps, but with a good and noble character. My father loved him as a

dear son, and I looked upon him as my brother; we shared our games, our joys and our sorrows, and there was a decided void in my life when, at the age of twelve, he was sent to the great city to obtain the necessary training for his future career—that of a lawyer. Six months before he left us my mother died, and I was very lonely; as I have said, it was only during Stephen's holidays that brightness came into my life. My father kept himself more and more in his library; so that I was left to myself until the day when he sent me, by Barbara's advice, to the convent school. Here I remained for three years, enjoying the instruction of the sisters and going home from time to time to find my father behind his books. Although he always met me with kindness, yet his absent manner repelled me more and more. Often I did not see him except at our simple meals, and then he would be so deep in thought as

to take no notice of me. How I longed for a token of his love! How often I stood before the door of his study not daring to enter! How often I followed his steps as he walked up and down the garden, hoping to receive some kind word or a tender look!

The last of the three years appointed for my education I passed uninterruptedly at the school. During this time I did not once see my father, and the few lines which I received from him did not satisfy the craving for love in my heart. But at the end of the term he suddenly appeared at the convent to take me home, and what a remarkable change showed itself in his manner toward me! He told me he had just recovered from severe illness, and, indeed, the traces of it were only too visible. The flame of filial love, so long held back by his cold demeanor, burst out to a bright blaze in my heart. The loneliness of the convent,

the associating exclusively with older persons, had given me a gravity which made me seem five or six years older than I really was.

My father told me he had been wishing most longingly to have me with him during the remaining years—perhaps days—of his life. What did I hear? A feeling of happiness such as I had never felt before thrilled my heart. My father wished my service, my care, in his old age! My tears and kisses betrayed to him my gladness at his tender words.

We received a joyful welcome from Barbara. At least ten times she assured me that I was the image of my mother, which assertion the silent Pierre confirmed by a dignified nod of the head. So I was again in my dear old home, where my days passed quietly and peacefully.

My father's health did not improve rapidly, and he began to look like an old man.

The greater part of the day he spent, as formerly, in his study, but it did not disturb him when I took my work or a book and went in to sit with him. Sometimes I persuaded him to a walk through the garden to admire the flowers, which were entrusted to my especial care. Sometimes I induced him to climb with me the Red Hills; and here, on the fresh, airy heights, my father and I had many pleasant talks. He told me about his early life, about the outside world, which he pictured for me in glowing colors. I learned, too, that he had devoted a great part of his life to the improvement of the human race and had worked hard for the realization of his ideas, but so far had received nothing but ingratitude and disappointment, and even scorn and derision. He also confided to me that he had for years been engaged in writing a large work from which he promised himself the most blessed

results. I devoted to him all my time now, while, as his eyesight began to fail, I wrote at his dictation or read to him passages from books of reference. My father never spoke of his religious views and never hindered my attendance at church, yet I knew he called himself a free-thinker. He believed in a higher Being—a Creator: that was all. As for me, I observed with strict conscientiousness the precepts of our good old village priest, Père La Fontaine, but beyond the present life I knew little. Why did not my father go to mass and confession? I wondered; but when I asked Barbara, she made the sign of the cross and answered only with a deep sigh. Yet this did not trouble me much. I was happy in the consciousness of his love.

I had no other companions, for my father, though so poor, would never allow me to associate with the village children. True, I

sometimes visited the cottages of the poor, but generally I took my walks in the neighboring woods and dreamed of happy days in the future which my father had pictured for me.

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CHAPTER II.

MY MOTHER'S LEGACY.

IT was a beautiful morning in early spring. Standing at an open window, I looked thoughtfully out at the little village shut in between two high mountains, at the gray church and at the white stone that covered my mother's grave; and, looking at that grave, I felt sad that instead of enjoying with me the sweet flowers, or listening to the song of the birds and the humming of the insects, she was shut out from this beautiful world and lying in that cold, desolate earth. Must one go through purgatory, I wondered, to be purified from sin? Barbara had assured me that my mother was too pure and spotless to need purgatory, but she would be welcomed

by the Virgin without delay, and by her intercession could come before her holy Son; but I could not understand it.

I was especially disquieted by the remembrance that during the last months of her life my mother had not gone to mass, much to the displeasure of our priest. And yet Barbara said she was not in purgatory, but in heaven, whatever the priest might say.

But heaven was so far off, so strange—God, a stern judge; and I had never earnestly tried to keep his commandments: could I enter heaven and see again the face of my beloved mother?

In vain I sought to drive away these painful thoughts; the last days of my mother vividly came before me. I clearly remembered that the priest made frequent visits. He was very different from the kind Père La Fontaine, who preached to our people now. I can see yet this man with the cold, stern

features and the hollow, deep-set eyes; and whenever he came into my mother's room, her face would grow deadly pale and seem to me to wear a despairing, hopeless expression. What he said to her I never knew, for I was always obliged to leave the room at his appearance.

One day I saw him come out of the sick-room with a very grave countenance, and heard him tell Pierre to go immediately for the doctor, for his mistress was much worse. At sight of the priest I had quickly hidden myself, but as soon as the two men had disappeared I ran to my mother. What a sight met my eyes! My dear mother lay, pale as death, upon the couch, while her pretty dress was covered with blood. I uttered a shriek, for I thought her already dead. I had not seen Barbara in the room, but she came forward from the side of the couch, and, throwing her arms round me, carried

me out of the room. She assured me my mother would soon be better, and told me we must wait for the doctor's coming; then she left me to my grief.

In a few minutes Dr. Duprat arrived; and after what seemed to me an interminable time I heard his footsteps descending the stairs. Seeing my distressed face, he stopped and spoke to me kindly, telling me my mother was a little better, but must not be disturbed. I read in his countenance that there was little hope of her recovery, but I comforted myself with the thought that even doctors could sometimes mistake. I passed an unhappy night, and the following days were made sadder by the fact that my father was away travelling and would not be back until the end of the week.

Dr. Duprat made frequent visits; Barbara rarely left the sick-room; only *I* was kept out. At last my father came. I rushed to

welcome him, but started back with fear. Such a look of grief and anguish I had never before seen on his face. Without paying any attention to me, he went quickly up the stairs. I had hoped to be able to go in with him, but was disappointed. Weeping quietly, I took my position outside the door and listened, but a silence as of the grave reigned inside.

Presently I was aroused by the sound of light footsteps. The priest, whose entrance into the sick-chamber the doctor had positively forbidden, crept near, opened the door hastily and went in. Then I heard scarcely audible, broken whispering, drowned by the deep tones of the priest, then the sobbing voice of Barbara and sharp, angry words from my father. I could bear it no longer. I opened the door noiselessly and slipped in unnoticed. First of all my eyes sought my mother. She was lying propped up with

pillows, white as marble, and her eyes were closed. Beside her, holding her hand in his own, was my father, while Barbara, sobbing and crying, knelt at the foot of the bed. Opposite my father stood the priest. Anxious as I had been that no one should notice me, I could not suppress my tears. Loudly sobbing, I threw myself on the bed. Then my dear mother opened her eyes and whispered, "Lèonie, is it you, my darling?" then closed her tired eyes again.

She lay there still and peaceful. We watched her breathlessly. How lovely she looked! The sadness which her face had sometimes worn was all gone. Père Lefevre tried to break the silence, but a peremptory gesture of my father stopped him.

Then the dying eyes opened again, and, half raising herself, my mother looked round on us all with a glance full of heavenly brightness, and said in a low but distinct tone,

“Gustavus, dear husband, it is all over—the darkness, the worry, the fear. My sins are great, but I have found forgiveness. All is peace, peace, peace! Light has come into the darkness, and here”—and she drew out from under the counterpane a little book—“I have found it all. Gustavus, Lèonie, dear child, for you also—for you.” Exhausted, she sank back, and lay for some moments quiet and motionless. Then she opened her eyes again, and said clearly and distinctly, “Yes, light—light in the darkness.” Those were her last words.

I remember again seeing her as she lay robed for burial. The smile which had rested on her lips at parting seemed still to linger; she looked so sweet and peaceful that I could not realize she was dead. They buried her under a large tree close by the churchyard wall, and we came back to our home to miss her afresh at every turn. My

father shut himself up in his study, and I was alone with my sorrow—oh, so alone! True, the sadness lost its sharp sting a little when Stephen came, in a few weeks, to visit us; but I could not forget that death-bed scene. What kind of a light was it that made her happier in the hour of death than she had ever been during her life?

I went to Barbara for the solution of the problem, but she would not, or could not, answer me; and when I asked about that little book, she crossed herself and said the priest had taken it away with other books. I would certainly have spoken about this as it seemed to me unwarrantable proceeding, but shortly after the death of my mother he had been removed to the South of France. I never saw him again, and after I was sent to the convent school the book went gradually out of my thoughts.

But on this day, while my eyes rested on

the gravestone on which the sun was shining, and under which the body of my mother had rested these four years, the remembrance of the past came over me with a force which I could not resist. Now I know that it was a stronger power than mere remembrance—an influence mightier than all natural feelings. It was the first moving of the Spirit of God, whose working is like the invisible wind, of which we cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth. Deep feelings of anxiety oppressed my heart. Life, death, eternity, appeared to me. I looked at the charming landscape: here was life; and life belonged to me to-day. I looked at the countless graves in the churchyard: there was death; and after death is eternity. And death and eternity should one day be my portion—perhaps very soon. Was I prepared? My conscience said, “No.” Now I know it was the voice of God that spoke to me.

But I was still so young! and death and eternity—did not they belong to the old or middle-aged? A fresh grave upon which my eyes fell answered me. There lay a young girl who only a few weeks ago laughed joyously in the world. I had sat at her bedside and comforted her with the prospect of speedy recovery, but she gave me such a despairing, hopeless look as she cried,

“No, no! I know I must die—I feel it; but where am I going? All is dark before me—so frightfully dark!”

“Cannot our good priest show you the way?” I asked, compassionately.

“Oh no,” she answered; “he told me all will be well as soon as I have received the extreme unction. But all is so dark—so dark!”

For several days after my visit the hopeless expression of her eyes followed me. Now I looked at her grave and shuddered.

She had passed through the gates of eternity; she knew now where she was. And then I thought of my mother again, and of how she had died: what made her so happy when she saw death before her? Was it not that mysterious book? Oh how I wanted to see it! I made up my mind to ask my father about it. With this resolve I left the window and hastened to the kitchen to help Barbara; for two gentlemen were coming to-day to dine with my father, and I knew my help would be needed. It was very seldom that the monotony of our daily life was disturbed by such an occurrence, and to-day, anxious as I was to ask my question, I was sorry to see them come.

Interested in the same pursuits as my father, they were to him most welcome guests. Absorbed in conversation, I saw all three walking up and down the garden-paths, until at length they went into the study.

When Barbara needed me no longer, I went out of doors, and on through the shady woods to the top of the hill. How beautifully the beams of the setting sun shone on the fresh young foliage of the trees, and on the neighboring ruins and the roofs of the village cottages! Only the graveyard lay in shadow.

On my return the strangers were still there, and I went, hardly knowing why, into the room which had been my mother's. It had not been used and very seldom opened after her death. Except that her bookshelf had been robbed of nearly all her books and contained now only a few volumes, nothing was changed. I drew back the curtains, and as the rays of the sun, now just above the horizon, lighted up the room and the furniture, covered thickly with dust, I heard again the words of my mother: "Light in the darkness;" and, standing there in the midst of these reminders of that death-bed scene, the

question came to me again, "Where can I find this light?" Thoughtfully I went to the bookshelf and turned over the leaves of some of the remaining books; there was nothing there but poems and legends from the lives of the saints. I could not find there the longed-for light.

I was just about laying the books back again in their places when my eyes fell upon a little written paper; it was already yellow with time, but in the half-faded characters I recognized the trembling hand of my mother. The words were new and strange, yet they seemed very beautiful to me.

I have still that piece of paper—that priceless legacy of my dear mother—and with joy I read again the words written on it:

"God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.

“Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee ; but the night shineth as the day ; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

“God is a spirit : and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?

“For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.”

Farther down, written last, and with an apparently unsteady hand, I read this :

“There is only one sacrifice for sins ; only one name by which we can be saved ; only one Mediator between God and man.”

That was all, but it was enough. Surely, God had led my mother to write down these words for me, and to lay them in this book ; and certainly Père Lefevre did not imagine, when he so carefully removed all traces of heresy, that so small a strip of paper would make all his work in vain.

How long I remained there pondering those written words I do not know. A sound of steps told me the guests were going, and presently my father called me. I folded up the paper hastily, put it in my pocket and ran to him. I found him looking weak and exhausted. His friends had brought him bad news; they had been speaking of the probability of a war between Germany and France. My father was, it is true, a Frenchman, but he had spent many years in Germany and had a special liking for that country; and then, too, my mother had been a German.

We talked long of this matter, and, fearing to disturb him more, for some time I did not dare to speak to him of the things for which my heart was hungering and thirsting. Finally there came a pause, and, summoning my courage, with a beating heart I laid my hand in his. He must have felt how I trem-

bled, for he turned and looked at me with an air of surprise.

“What is the matter, Léonie, my child?” he asked, kindly. “What ails you? Why this trembling? Are you afraid of the war?”

The extraordinary tenderness of his tones, the warm pressure of his hand, gave me courage, and I answered:

“No, no, dear papa: I have something to ask you, and fear to give you pain. Yet I must say it. Will you not tell me something about my mother?”

I saw that my question agitated him, and his hand pressed mine convulsively. But the ice was broken, and with tears I told him all that I had been thinking during the day.

When I had finished, he remained for several minutes perfectly quiet; then he drew me to him and pressed me closely to his

heart, while his tears mingled with mine. At last he released me, and, opening his coat, showed me a little case fastened to a chain which he wore around his neck.

In a moment I had opened it. There was the portrait of a lovely young lady whom I recognized immediately as my mother, although the sweet pale face which I remembered was only a shadow of that which the picture represented. Yet I knew it was of my mother. I looked long at the picture. What a serene expression the charming face had! How smilingly and fearlessly the eyes looked out on the world! What had caused such a change, which had come between the time when this picture was taken and that when the grave closed over her?

A painful sigh from my father disturbed my reverie.

"Yes, Lèonie; an inward sorrow early destroyed your mother's life," he said. "You

knew her as tender and loving, but pale and delicate; I knew her as a young, blooming girl, as the picture represents her. Certainly you are right to want to know all I can tell you about her. It is a sad history, and I have not told it to you before, because I did not want to cloud your young spirit unnecessarily, and because I did not know how much you remembered of your mother. Bound by a solemn promise not in any way to hinder your religious convictions, I thought it best to leave the past undisturbed. But now I am glad that the last barrier between us is broken down; it lightens my trouble to feel it so, my child.

“I learned to know your mother in Germany, where, as you know, I spent many years at the university in Leipsic. She was the daughter of an evangelical pastor, and at that time seventeen years old. Though much attracted by her beauty, and espe-

cially by her quiet, gentle ways, yet when I returned home our acquaintance was but slight. As my parents had long been dead, I found myself entirely my own master. I determined to remain here in my own house for a while and finish a work which I intended for publication. I engaged Barbara as housekeeper, and lived here for several years alone with my books. One day I received an invitation from the count of Mornaco. On my entrance to his castle I met a young lady whom at the first glance I recognized as your mother. She had been an orphan a year, and was here now as governess to the count's children. She had still the same bright, gentle manner, but her face often wore an expression of sadness. I wondered if it was on account of the death of her parents, or if she were homesick. But not until later did I know that the reason lay deeper. The second son of the count had been designed

for the priesthood, but since he had known the gentle governess he suddenly changed his purpose and sought secretly to win her hand. She too had long felt herself drawn to the young man, and perhaps would not have rejected his proposals if he had not made a condition with which she was not willing to comply. He demanded that the young lady, who was a Protestant, should join the Roman Catholic Church. It was a hard struggle. From childhood she had been taught to take the Bible as the only foundation of her belief: how could she belong to a Church which forbade her to read it? But at last she could no longer hold out; from love to him, not from conviction, she went over to the Catholic Church. But from that time the bloom faded from her cheeks.

“Scarcely was this step taken when the storm broke. The family confessor—a strict

Jesuit—set himself to break the bond which united these two, declaring it to be a deadly sin to give up for an earthly love his proposed life in the service of the Church. Finally, urged by the priest, the young man yielded, took upon himself the vows of a priest and placed an impassable barrier between two hearts that perhaps might have been happy. Without any leavetaking he suddenly disappeared. This picture of your mother was returned to her without any note or explanation of any sort, and she never again heard a syllable from him.”

CHAPTER III.

UNWELCOME GUESTS.

“**Y**OUR poor mother, Lèonie! She resembled a fading flower. Without parents, without a home, without shelter, what should she do? She could no longer remain at the castle. I offered her my house, and after some months she came to us. I had never been able to forget her since the first time I saw her, and I hoped that time would heal her wounds, and that later I might be able to win her for my wife. And the time, which I spent mostly in foreign countries, quickly passed until the day when your mother consented to become my wife. Gradually she recovered; and, though generally grave, at times she was bright and

cheerful. A year later you were born, and from that time she appeared to be really happy. Yet, alas! this joy was of short duration; I noticed that a secret sorrow seemed gnawing at her heart. Her depression increased with every year; her strength grew less, until at last it was evident that she was hastening with rapid steps to the grave. The reason for her melancholy and ill-health long remained a mystery to me, but finally she told me all. By joining the Catholic Church she believed she had, like Peter, denied her Lord, without being able to find the forgiveness the apostle had received. You can fancy, Lèonie, what it was to me to know that a fancied sin was killing her; she knew that my reason rejected the myths and fables which were ruining her life. You are frightened, child. Yes, they are hard words. I promised your mother, when you lay, an infant, in your cradle, that I would never in-

duce you in any way to embrace my religious views. But the thought that the cruel superstition has robbed me of my dearest treasure compels me to say what I feel. Many of the biblical theories are not to be denied; there is a God, Lèonie: creation tells us that; but what are we to him? Enough of that. Be happy, my child; and if it throws no shadow on your path, believe what you will.

“After a time I noticed your mother seemed happier and devoted herself more to her household duties. But then came those often-repeated disputes with Père Lefevre, and this destroyed her strength entirely and finally brought her to her grave. Now you know all. The book in which she, as she said, found light and peace was the New Testament. How and when she had obtained it, or whether she had always had it, I know as little as I know what the priest

has done with it. My dear wife was taken from me, and with her the sunshine of my whole life.

“In the bitterness of my pain I closed my heart against even you, my child, for many years. Now I have told you everything, and I believe it is well. I have reached a time when the end of life does not seem far off. However, I hope before that time comes to entrust you to some one with whom you will find protection and safety; and when I die—” Here he lowered his voice and broke off suddenly.

I threw myself into his arms, and the tears which we both wept were to the memory of our dear one.

In a few moments my father raised his head and said,

“This has been too much for you, Lèonie; I feared it. Go now to rest, dear child. To-morrow morning you will be better; and if

you love me, do not dwell on the past, but live in the present." With these words he took me by the hand as if I were a little child and led me to the kitchen, where he gave me into Barbara's charge and left me with a kiss.

When I went to my bedroom I threw myself on my knees by the bed. But no words passed my lips: only a sigh for light rose from my heart. It was long before sleep came to make me forget the troubles and the struggles of the day.

Earnest, thoughtful days followed. The spring was succeeded by a beautiful summer, but in my heart it remained always winter. My father was very kind and tender with me, but he never by word or manner alluded to the subject of which I thought so much. I read over and over again those words written by my mother, for I felt they were the words of God. I observed the rules of the Church

as carefully as before, yet with the instinctive feeling that they would bring me no rest. My mother had not observed them in her last days, and I was certain she was right. I sought help from our venerable priest, Père La Fontaine, but he, a gentle, kind but rather narrow-minded man, knew nothing about what was going on in the world; he could talk only about the Church and her saints. There was nothing for me, therefore, but to wait and pray that God in his mercy would show me the light.

My heart was not the only troubled one; outside in the world the storm had broken. War was declared. Men were everywhere arming for battle; large armies were marching hither and thither. The military spirit of the nation was aroused; thousands talked of the glorious times of the past and of victories and triumphs in the future. Even our little village was much agitated; husbands,

brothers, sons, friends, stood already on the battlefields, and those left at home waited with eagerness.

In our own home these events affected us less; my father had led such a retired life for years that we did not even know if any of our relatives were in the army. He was too busy with the completion of a book from which he expected great results to trouble himself with affairs that were at variance with his humane ideas and bright dreams of the future of mankind. It was quite indifferent to him whether Germany or France should win, but on this point Stephen did not agree with him. He had come home at the beginning of the trouble, and did not doubt of the final victory of our beautiful France. The young enthusiast would gladly have gone to fight had not the wishes of my father held him back.

I myself was so much taken up with my

own battles that I had no thoughts for what was going on in the world. I little dreamed how soon those drawn bows would send their arrows into our home and hearts; and before the first ball had been sent on its dreadful mission something had happened at home which claimed every thought and faculty. The Angel of Death had knocked at our door, and, although he delayed his entrance for a time, he threw many dark shadows over us.

One lovely July evening, as I came into my father's room after a long walk in the woods, my heart stood still: he was sitting in his chair with his eyes closed and such a deathlike look on his face that I thought he must be dead. I quickly called the others, and it was with considerable trouble that Stephen and Pierre got him undressed and put him to bed. For several hours he was unconscious, and many days passed before

he could move himself, and several weeks before he could leave his bed and resume his usual occupations. Dr. Duprat said his patient had overtaxed his brain by too much mental work. Not the words, but the sympathizing manner, of this kind friend showed me that I must soon lose my father. This feeling extinguished every other thought in my heart. Through the day I seldom left the sick-room, and during the night Stephen and the faithful, self-sacrificing Barbara watched with him.

The events which were thrilling all Europe still continued. One misfortune followed another, one catastrophe pressed closely on the heels of its predecessor. The terrible news of bloody defeats and losses, of disorders and destruction, were like leaden weights on the spirits of the people. But the darker the cloud, the higher rose the determination to conquer. Though the bravest

and the best had fallen, though the greater part of our army lay in prison and the enemy with their constantly growing armies spread themselves over the most beautiful provinces, yet thousands in all parts of the country were ready to fill again the thinned ranks. Without doubt victory would not be denied to our almost unconquerable France.

By the end of September my father had so far recovered that he felt strong enough to resume his usual occupations, although he was not allowed to leave his room. In vain Dr. Duprat warned him against writing or studying: his desire to finish his book was so great that he would listen to no remonstrance. As his strength decreased and his eyesight became dimmer, my time during the day was so claimed by him that I seldom heard of the stormy events that were occurring all around us, and at night I slept the peaceful sleep of childhood. What troubled

me most was the uncertainty about the safety of my own soul and of that of my father. The thought of standing in the presence of a holy and just God was so terrible to me that I could not understand how my father could be so calm, and I prayed earnestly for us both that God would in his mercy lead us into the light.

October had come, and still our national trouble increased. Germany was continually sending fresh armies to lay waste our beautiful land. Already several bodies of troops had entered some of the adjacent cities and villages; and although until now we had escaped the burden of the war, yet our turn was soon to come.

Late on one of the finest days of the month I was sitting on the window-seat in my father's room and looking out dreamily on the street, when suddenly I heard the sound of horses' feet clattering over the

stones. At the same moment I saw two German soldiers coming toward our house. Surprised, I moved back from the window and watched them. Presently they stopped before the door and examined the house narrowly; then one of them took out a little book and wrote something in it, after which they turned their horses' heads and galloped off at full speed. It was all the work of a few minutes. Not very long afterward my curiosity as to their proceeding was gratified; for about an hour later I saw a division of dragoons come up the poplar walk toward the house. The foremost riders stopped before the large door, and one of them called out:

“Twenty men quartered here.”

The designated number remained, while the others rode off to the village. A few alighted and tried to open the great heavy door, but the rusty hinges mocked all their

endeavors; so there was nothing left for the men but to use the little door leading to the courtyard. I saw it all with terror. Twenty men were to be quartered at our house, and my father was so weak and sick! Besides, during the last few days he had been much worse.

Some of the soldiers took their tired horses into the stable; others rapped at the house door—at first softly, but then, as it was not immediately opened, with a threatening noise, as if they would knock the house down.

My father started at the commotion. I hurried to him and said as calmly as possible,

“Don’t be frightened, father; it is only what we have been expecting. We have twenty soldiers quartered here; we will have to bear it as best we can.”

Again came heavy kicks, accompanied by a command to open the door immediately.

"Where is Barbara? Where are Stephen and Pierre? They must be in the house," whispered my father.

"I remember now," I said: "Barbara declared yesterday she would never allow a German to step over our threshold, no matter how hard he should knock."

"But resistance will only make them angry," answered my father. "I will go out to them, or they will break the door down."

"Oh no," I cried, holding him back; "I will call Barbara and tell her to open the door. I am not afraid;" and before he could stop me I was out of the room and down stairs.

The noise still continued. In the hall stood Barbara, pale and in the greatest excitement. She as well as Stephen seemed determined not to admit the enemy.

"Barbara, open the door right away," I called. "Do you not see you are only mak-

ing them angry? Quickly! Let the men in, and give them what they want.—And, Stephen, do be civil to them, or else—”

But before I could finish the sentence several soldiers walked into the hall. They had found their way in through the back door, which the less courageous Pierre had been set to guard, and were loud in their demands for food and drink.

As I feared, Barbara would do nothing for the tired and hungry strangers; so I went through the crowd of men, who politely let me pass, and called to Barbara, who was scolding loudly,

“Barbara! Stephen! For my sake, for my father’s sake, stop this foolish resistance.—Barbara, give these people what they want. The noise will certainly kill my father.” Then, turning to the soldiers, I said, in broken German, “The servants will furnish you with what you need, but I beg you,

for the sake of my sick father, to be as quiet as possible."

As I turned away I saw my father himself standing at the end of the hall. As soon as he had heard the soldiers in the house he had come down, notwithstanding his great weakness, to protect me from any rudeness from our self-invited guests. But they seemed pacified by my words; some of them even looked at me with kindly sympathy. I led my father up to his room again. Here we listened silently to the noise below.

Evening began to draw near, and as I lighted the lamp I saw with deep concern how much shaken my father was by the excitement. He was leaning back in his arm-chair, and I noticed how very old he seemed, how haggard his face looked. I seized the bell-rope and pulled it violently, for I saw he needed a restorative, and I did not dare to leave him to get it.

“Barbara cannot come now, my child,” he murmured.

Yet in the same moment we heard the quick, short steps of the active woman, and, shortly after, her tap at the door; she had brought us our dinner. But what fear and trouble her manner showed! Hastily she placed the dishes on the table and said with a vehemence that would not be suppressed,

“Here I am at last. It has given me trouble enough to bring this dinner safely before those hungry wild beasts. Bigger eaters I never saw in all my life. What is to become of us if they stay here long I cannot think. They will eat up everything, and they drink— Well, I thought they would drink up all the wine. If that coward of a Peter had only hindered them from coming in! And now, Miss Lèonie, they will kill your poor sick father with their noise, the rough creatures!”

"Softly, my good Barbara," said my father. "We are certainly in an unpleasant situation, and you will have the most to bear, but the least resistance will only make it worse. In war one must expect this, and we will have good cause to be happy if nothing worse should come."

"'Nothing worse,' do you say?" interrupted Barbara. "Can there be anything worse than to have them act as if this was the meanest hut, and for these gibberish-talking drunkards to go from room to room and make such a noise and riot? I tell you our house in a month's time will be emptied from garret to cellar."

"Oh, Barbara," I said, "it is certainly sad, but I hope they will soon leave us."

"'Leave us'!" she cried, angrily. "I do not believe that. One of the men, who can speak a little French, told me they would stay here several weeks, because the men

were worn out and they were waiting for fresh troops before going south."

"'Several weeks'?" I repeated, frightened.

"Yes. You see, Miss Léonie, I am right to be angry with that stupid Pierre. Now he is courtesying to them, making about ten bows a minute to those Prussians, as if he was their slave. I am delighted with your cousin Stephen: he has genuine French blood in his veins; and if I were a man—" A look at my father's pale face stopped her, and we seated ourselves silently at the little table, while the tumult, the singing and laughing and cheering, went on below.

My poor father suffered greatly; his whole nervous system seemed to be shattered. What was to be done? I noticed a bright fever-flush on his hollow cheeks, and as he opened his eyes how feverish they looked! Everything showed great excitement, which

Dr. Duprat had told us was especially dangerous, because it might lead to another attack. And as I tried to refresh him by bathing his face and hands with cool water, I noticed that every fresh burst of noise made his lips twitch convulsively.

I could bear it no longer, and, leaving the room hastily, I was about going down the stairs, when Barbara came up to me, her face fairly glowing with anger.

"You are not going down stairs, Miss Lèonie; it is dangerous," she cried.

"Barbara," I said, in a quiet but determined tone, "something must be done, or my father will die. Cannot either you or Stephen beg these people to be quieter? Tell them my father is sick—that he will die if—" I could not go on.

The anger disappeared from the face of the faithful woman and made room for deep compassion and tender love.

"My poor lamb," she said, "I have done everything to stop them, but it was of no use. Some are drunk, and all are so pleased with their change of quarters that they cannot spare an ear to listen to an old woman like me. Perhaps they will soon go to sleep. They demand good beds; well, they may hunt for them, then. I have locked the doors to the two best sleeping-rooms; the others are at their service."

"Then I will speak to them," I said, summoning all my courage. "I am not afraid. Maybe they will heed me."

"What, Miss Lèonie!" she cried, holding me back. "What! you will go? Do you know what you are doing? No; you shall not get a sight of those rude fellows. I say you shall not."

"But they were kind to me when I spoke to them before."

"No, my child. How could you—so

young and timid—go before such a crowd?

No, no!"

"Then come with me, Barbara," I urged.

"*I* go with you, my little lamb? My being with you would only make them laugh again. They make fun of my dress: I heard them."

"Then I must go alone, and I *will* go," I said, determinedly, turning away.

"Oh, and no one will be near you if they insult you!—Holy Mary! holy Mother of God! protect the poor child!"

My knees trembled, my heart beat tumultuously, as I went down into the hall and heard the rough voices and strange language. My courage disappeared. Could I carry out my purpose? If only I had help in my necessity! Without knowing exactly what I did, I sank upon my knees, folded my hands and said in a whisper,

"O God, thou alone canst help me."

Little as I knew about God, I believed that he is great and good and merciful, and I did not at all doubt that he would help me in my great need. And, indeed, help did come, though from an unexpected source.

CHAPTER IV.

I FIND A FRIEND.

I ROSE from my knees and firmly and with full confidence that I would be guided went up to the noisy group of soldiers. At that minute the door opened and a tall, strongly-built man in the uniform of a German officer came into the room. Seeing me, he hesitated a moment, and then, taking off his cap and bowing politely, he came up to me. At first this new arrival had alarmed me afresh, but as the stranger came under the light of the lamp, and I saw nothing but kindness and good-will in his face, my fear vanished and I felt almost as if I had found an old acquaintance.

“Pardon, my young lady,” he said, in good

French and in a voice which quite won my heart, "but I read in your eyes that the rather boisterous behavior of my men troubles you."

"Oh, sir," I answered, "if you have any influence over the soldiers, if you are an officer, I beg you please make them be quiet. My father is sick, and I fear this noise will kill him."

"It shall be stopped immediately, little one," he replied, while his brow darkened at the noise in the adjoining room. "Wait a moment if you please."

With a quickness which seemed wonderful to me, he brought forward a chair and begged me to sit down. I was so nervous and excited that I gladly took it. Then he opened the door of the room where the men were, and closed it after him. It became suddenly still, as the soldiers recognized their colonel; then I heard the grave, determined words of the latter. After a few

minutes he opened the door again and returned to me.

"Believe me," he said, in his winning way, "that I deeply regret that you and your father have been disturbed. I promise you there shall be no more noise—at least, not quite so much," he added, smiling. "It is not always possible to restrain my men, especially when they have such comfortable shelter and such a table as they seldom enjoy."

"I thank you a thousand times," said I, rising.

"No; you owe me no thanks. The war compels me and some of my men to claim your hospitality for a few days, and it is my duty to see that it is not abused. I must beg your pardon for the behavior of my people, and I assure you it was not rudeness or incivility, but thoughtlessness, which did not let them remember there was sickness in the house."

"Oh no ; that was not so," broke in the still angry Barbara, who had come into the room in time to hear the last remark. "I told them at least twenty times that they would kill my master : they only laughed at me and answered me with some gibberish. If you had not come, they would have treated my little lady in the same way."

"I was going to tell them about my father and beg them to be quiet," I said as the stranger turned to me inquiringly. "I could not bear to see him suffer so, and I thought maybe the soldiers would listen to a child when they would pay no attention to a grown person."

"I am glad, however," he said, "that I came at the right time. Procuring lodgings in the village for the rest of my men took me so long ! But you may tell your father that although we must beg his hospitality for several days, yet I will try to prevent his

being in the least disturbed or annoyed. I will now—if this old lady will lend a helping hand and show me the sleeping-apartments—command my men to retire. Under my eyes they will be contented with whatever you give them.”

Thanking him again, I ran up stairs with a lighter heart. In the voice, in the look, in the whole appearance of the man, there was something that won my full confidence. I had looked up to him as to a father; I felt that we had found a protector in him.

As I supposed, my father had been awaiting my return with anxiety and impatience. My story of the last arrival and his kind behavior seemed to quiet him, for he whispered,

“Depend upon it, many a noble heart beats under our enemy’s uniform.”

I took my place on a low stool near him, and we sat there silent, listening to the foot-

steps in the direction of the unused parts of the house.

Soon afterward Barbara, followed by Stephen, came into the room with an air of great contentment in her looks. The stranger had understood how to quiet her grumblings, and even Stephen seemed to have forgotten a little of his hatred toward the Prussians.

Barbara said the colonel was in my father's library, and his conduct had wrought such a wonderful change in her that she had considered it her duty to give him the best room and the best bed. He stood high in her favor; now she wished to know what she should do for his entertainment, and if my father would prefer to have him eat alone or if she should set a place for him at our table. The latter, she thought, would be the better plan; for without doubt the colonel was a gentleman, and so agreeable in conversation

and manner that no one was as capable as he to give us a true account of the war.

My father turned to me:

"What do you think of it, Lèonie? It seems to me only civil to show some politeness to the stranger."

"That is what I think too, papa," I said. "And it will be less trouble to Barbara, who has her hands full already, to give us our meals together than to set a separate table for our guest."

"Well, Barbara, then give the gentleman my compliments and beg him to visit me."

Barbara, pleased, hastened out of the room on her errand. In a few moments we knew by the approaching footsteps that the invitation had been accepted.

How well I remember it all! Everything connected with that minute now stands out before me as vividly as if ten days, not years, had passed since then. The fire

glowed cheerily in the grate and lighted up the old furniture, that had seen many generations, while in the background a silver lamp shed its bright rays on the weak, emaciated figure of my father, whose pale features and white hair showed clearly against the red covering of his arm-chair. Alas! his whole appearance already wore unmistakable signs that he was not long for this world.

The stranger entered and softly came up to the sick man; his demeanor, as well as his kind words to my father, showed that war had not hardened his heart. How deep, how sincere, seemed his regret to be compelled by circumstances to increase the sorrow in our house!

My father was visibly moved by his words. With an effort he whispered:

"Sir, you are welcome under my roof, whatever be the circumstances that gave me

the honor of your acquaintance. I have spent several years in Germany, and found there many noble hearts; and if I am compelled to find in you an enemy of my country, yet I place the fullest trust in your generosity." Exhausted by his exertion, he lay for a while with his poor tired head resting against the cushions of his chair. But in a minute or two, as if he had received new strength, he began again: "Yes, my dear sir, I place my little daughter under your protection. You can easily understand how I have been troubled for her—my motherless child. Fancy to yourself a house full of noisy soldiers and I so helpless. But now my worry is all gone. You will guard her—will you not?—as long as you are in my house, against any ill-treatment or vexation."

"You do not need me to assure you that I will not abuse your confidence," our guest

replied, gently. "As long as I am here, Miss Lèonie will have nothing to fear; it will be my pleasure to be a true friend to her in these sad circumstances. As for my soldiers, I promise you, sir, that your little daughter will need no protector. That they overstepped the bounds of decorum to-night during my absence is owing to the fact that they have been on the march for fourteen days, and in their joy at such comfortable quarters forgot themselves. I beg you, therefore, to be perfectly easy, and do not be troubled by a uniform which, alas! reminds us that two neighboring countries have challenged each other to a destroying contest."

"Oh no, no!" whispered my father. "I feel too little sympathy with this unhappy war not to honor the enemy whom duty calls to battle. But now, my dear sir, be seated, and tell me something, if you will, of yourself."

I will not try to repeat the details of their

conversation, although almost every word is stamped indelibly on my memory. It will be sufficient if I give the colonel's story in my own words.

Herr von Wertheim—for that was the name of our guest—was the only son of a major who had died in battle. Already destined for the army, he had studied at a military school, and now, having passed his examination just before his father's death, had entered the service. He had always been a faithful officer and a favorite with his superiors (these facts I gained from others), although he had never had a great liking for his calling. Highly as he honored his father, his heart clung to his mother at home and his sister. After the last war he had laid down his arms and devoted himself to the care of his estate. The present contest between France and Germany had again called him to serve his country.

My father listened with great interest, and the questions which he put to his visitor about Germany showed that he had gone back in memory to the days of his youth. Then their talk turned to other topics.

I sat and listened attentively. I had never had the opportunity of being present at a conversation which was so full of interest to me. Every word of our guest showed him a well-educated, cultured man, and my father seemed glad to have found some one with whom he could exchange thoughts. In one respect, however, their views seemed to be widely different. All the assertions of the officer averred distinctly that he placed his confidence in God—that he honored him and was his subject. Not that the talk had taken a religious character: on the contrary, my father seemed to avoid that, perhaps for my sake; but in the speech of the stranger there was something that betrayed his be-

lief in a living God; so that I said to myself at last,

“Herr von Wertheim knows that God is light; he knows him as a helper and a friend.”

At first he avoided all allusions to the war, fearful of exciting my father; but, as our patient seemed to be desirous of knowing all about the late events, he sketched with all candor a true picture of the sad condition in which our unhappy land was plunged. He acknowledged the enormous resources of France; he did not deny that whole armies seemed to grow in a night, like mushrooms, and that the warlike courage of the men rose almost to desperation; but, he said, this would only prolong the struggle. France would strain the power of Germany to its utmost, but would never conquer her. Disorder, bad management and utter ruin had been the fate of the

former armies of France, and defeat, discouragement and destruction would be the lot of the new. The fight would, he feared, be long and terrible; but the raw, undisciplined masses were scattered like leaves before the storm by the experienced and well-drilled German troops, and it was easy to foresee the end. He spoke with generous warmth of the bravery of the French, but with deep pity for the misery he saw around him. At last my father was tired and exhausted, and our guest, on whom we no longer looked as an enemy, needed rest. Barbara showed him to his room, and I sat down by the fire trying to collect the confused thoughts that made my head whirl and my heart tremble.

My father was silent, deep in thought; probably the conversation had called up remembrances of former days, for after a long pause he turned to me and said,

“In looks and manner our guest reminds me of my German friend of whose generosity I have often wanted to talk to you, but I have been silent about him because he had the same faith and hope as your mother.”

“How, papa?” I cried, full of surprise. “The same faith, the same hope? I should think that you—”

“You think I would have shared the feelings of one who was bound to me by the strongest ties of friendship,” he said, finishing my sentence as I dared not. “We differed on the answer to the question, ‘What is truth?’ For all his keen intellect and clearness of understanding, with the simple faith of a child he accepted the doctrines and revelations of what he considered the inspired word of God. Before he died he left a message for me; perhaps it would have been better if I had taken it to heart. I could not now, if I would: it is too late.”

A deep sigh accompanied these words. After a little he resumed:

“Yes, Lèonie; both those dearest to me were one in faith. Those who were present at my friend’s death-bed could not speak enough of his deep, unbroken joy and peace. His life, too, was so beautiful! and as I look back on mine it seems all a failure. I have leaned on a broken reed, and now that I shall soon go through the dark valley of the shadow of death I have no staff.”

What could I answer? I had no word of hope to give him. He had never spoken like this before, nor breathed a syllable that betrayed the fact that he thought his end approaching; nor had any one else seemed to notice it. I sat there pale and silent.

Soon his fever began to rise, and increased rapidly; all my efforts to cool his burning brow were useless: his anxiety of mind was too great to allow him to rest. Finally I

proposed to read to him, hoping that might soothe him; at first he refused, saying he was too restless to listen, but afterward he asked me to get him, from his library, a book by his favorite author, and to read to him some passages which had often refreshed him when weary in mind.

CHAPTER V.

MY FIRST PRAYER.

THE soldiers had long before retired to the part of the house assigned them. Everywhere the deepest stillness reigned. I took a lamp and crept softly down the stairs, occupied with my sad thoughts. I reached the door of the library, and as I opened it with surprise saw a light in the room. A feeling of fear came over me, but in the next second I had with relief recognized our German visitor. He sat before my father's desk, on which lay an open book, but he did not seem to be reading in it. His hands were folded, his eyes raised; I saw he was praying. Although such a child, I

had from the first known that the stranger had in his heart the same light which my mother had seen shine out from the darkness; and now, as I saw the expression of devotion and trust upon his face, I longed to know more of that light.

I stood there uncertain what to do. To interrupt him seemed to me sacrilege; and so I had just made up my mind to retire noiselessly when he turned his head, and as his eye fell on me I felt as if I had been detected in doing something wrong.

"Pardon me, my dear young lady," he said, gently. "Has anything happened? Is your father worse?"

"Oh no," I replied; "but he cannot sleep, and I have come for a book to read to him;" and, going to the bookcase, I tried to take out the volume I wished, but my trembling hands were not able to lift it.

Seeing this, the colonel came to me, took

the book under his arm, and said in a sympathizing tone,

"Your pale face, my dear child, shows that such night-watchings are too much for you."

"Oh, it is not always so," I answered; "but my father is very restless to-night, and I do not like to leave him."

"I fear that I and my men are the cause," he said, anxiously. "Your father appears to be in very poor health. You have a great deal to bear, I fear, and it troubles me to increase your burden."

These kind words were like a drop in an already overflowing cup. I sank upon the sofa, and the tears, which had been kept back all day, burst forth now. I tried to control myself, but in vain. Nature demanded her rights.

My companion had taken the lamp from my hand and was standing quietly before me.

In a few minutes I rose and endeavored to excuse myself for my weakness, but my lips refused to utter a word.

“My dear child,” he said, in his quiet, kindly tone, “I understand it all. Do not be ashamed of your tears. I am very sorry to have added to your trouble without being able to do anything to lighten it. But there is One who can help you. Do you know him?”

I shook my head, for I could not speak.

“Then turn to him; cast your care upon him. No one ever sought in vain; you will find him if you seek.” He stopped, but his words had done me good. I no longer felt myself helpless, for invisible powerful arms had surrounded me.

The remembrance that my father was waiting for me brought me back to myself. Accompanied by the kind stranger, who carried my book as well as the lamp, I went up the

stairs, and as we reached my father's door he stopped and said in a low tone,

"The Lord Jesus says, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'" Slowly and solemnly he repeated these words, and then bade me good-night. I could answer him only by a look of thanks: it seemed impossible for me to speak a word.

I found my father a little quieter; he had not heard the voice of our guest, and I was careful not to mention him. He pointed out the selection I should read, but before I had reached the end of the second page he had fallen into a sound sleep.

A quarter of an hour later I slipped away and went to my own room; here I thought a long time over the exciting occurrences of the day, and especially over the words of comfort and hope which Colonel von Wertheim had spoken to me. I heard again his words,

"No one ever sought in vain; you will find him if you seek." I fell on my knees and prayed: "Lord, I come to thee. Help me! Make me a Christian! Give me light!" That was all I knew to say; yet I rose with the confidence that the Lord had heard me, and, seeking my bed, soon fell into a refreshing slumber.

The glorious sunshine of the next morning was the forerunner of a whole week of beautiful autumn weather. The events of this week are written indelibly upon my heart. Looking back upon this time, it seems to me to have been the turning-point of my life. They were days of the purest happiness for me—an oasis in the barren sameness of my life.

This beautiful morning of which I speak my father seemed better and brighter than on the preceding evening; he had slept well, and felt stronger. The soldiers had gone

out at daybreak, and the usual stillness was over the house, only slightly disturbed when the men came back for breakfast. As they were now busy in the stables, I could not resist the temptation to make my flowers a morning visit.

I was soon down among my garden-beds, but they did not receive the usual care, for my mind was too full of other things. Foot-steps near at hand arrested my attention, and, looking up, I saw the German colonel. As I was behind a bush, he had not noticed me. I saw him take a little book out of his pocket, turn over several leaves and begin to read while he slowly walked up and down.

I debated within myself whether to stay where I was or to slip away. Had I cause to be afraid of him, after his kindness of yesterday? No; I would remain where I was. A long while I waited—it seemed as if what he read had drawn off his interest in

everything else—and I began to feel uncomfortable. At last he laid his book on a chair near him and let his eyes wander over the beautiful landscape which spread itself out before him in the dewy freshness of early morning. Suddenly he saw me, and, coming forward immediately, shook hands with me, saying, brightly,

“Ah, my little girl! Up so early after such a short night’s rest? Well, I see the beautiful morning has put roses in your cheeks. But your father: is he rested?”

“Thank you,” I answered. “He has slept well and feels a little better this morning, but he is very weak.” The thought of my father so moved my childish heart that I could say no more, and to hide my emotion bent down to tie up the tendrils of a honeysuckle.

Colonel von Wertheim assisted me, saying with a sad smile that this garden reminded him vividly of his loved home. He spoke

of his mother with expressions of the tenderest love, and drew a graphic picture of their house and garden, where he and his sister Thekla used to spend all the summer days; and every word he spoke betrayed how glad he was to find some one to whom he could talk of his home. With special emotion he spoke of the hour when the war tore him from the arms of his dear ones. His mother was already advanced in years, and had laid her hands in blessing on the head of her son as if it were their last parting, while his sister had wept bitter tears for not only her brother, but her betrothed, Carl Erhardt, who had to go to fight their country's battles. A few days since she had written her brother that Carl had been wounded in the first skirmish before Paris and no one knew anything further of his fate; she did not know if he were in prison or dead. Poor Thekla! Her brother far away, exposed to

great danger, her lover maybe dead! No wonder the colonel's voice trembled as he told me all this.

"But she has a mother who can comfort her," I said as he paused.

His face brightened at the thought of the dear mother at home, and the clouds cleared away from his brow. He spoke of her with such warmth that it brought back to me the remembrance of my own mother, and I felt impelled to tell him her story and, encouraged by his kind words, to open my troubled heart to him. Without knowing whether it were right or not, I told him of my fears for my father and for myself—how much I wished to possess that light which had filled my dying mother with such joy.

"Oh, sir," I said, "I am sure you have that light: can you tell me where to seek it—where I can go to find it?"

Taking his little book from where he had

laid it, the colonel opened it and read me one passage after another, while I listened with eagerness. When he closed the book again I sat motionless, deep in thought, while tears of joy rolled down my cheeks.

"My duty calls me now," my new friend said; "I must go to my men. Do you understand German?"

"A little," I answered; "I can read it tolerably, but I do not speak it very well."

"Then I will loan you my little Bible," he said.

"Oh, thank you!" I cried—"thank you a thousand times! But tell me, please, what part I shall read."

He opened the book again, turned over the leaves thoughtfully, and then said,

"No, my little friend; the Lord knows best what you need. He will guide you by his Spirit. Turn to him with the prayer that he will show you what to read and help you

to understand. Do not doubt; he will do it. Do you believe he could lie?"

"Who? God? That would be a frightful thought," I cried.

"Then believe him, for the Lord Jesus has said, 'If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it,' and 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'" With a courteous bow he left me.

I had no opportunity to examine the treasure he had left with me, for it was time to return to my father, from whom I had stayed longer than I intended. My brain was in a whirl of surprise, astonishment and joy; the sudden shining of light blinded me. It seemed as if I had come suddenly from a dark dungeon into the bright sunlight. How I longed for a chance to look at my beloved Bible! But the care which my father needed from me compelled me to wait.

During breakfast Colonel von Wertheim

came in ; my father greeted him heartily, and the conversation flowed as pleasantly and unrestrainedly as on the evening before. But nothing was said on the subject of my thoughts ; and when our guest left us, not to return until late in the evening, with alarm I heard my father say,

“I cannot write to-day, my hand trembles so. I will have to make use of your fingers, Lèonie.”

Without delay I seated myself at the desk, took pen and ink, and for two hours wrote at his dictation. Not that I was constantly busy all the time ; on the contrary, I noticed with sorrow how much less fluent and ready my father was than he used to be. Often he could not find the right words ; often he hesitated and pressed his hand against his forehead, as if he had lost the thread of his thoughts ; while sometimes I could scarcely keep pace with him. I thought, too, that

the style was not so flowing and that the ideas were often without connection.

My eyes smarted with trying to keep back the tears; my hands began to tremble. His words spoken to me yesterday I could not forget. Yes, it was true; he must, as he said, soon leave this earth. But whither? There came into my mind the words, "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." Could I not pray for my dear sick father? Oh, surely I should be heard; Jesus himself had promised it. A great hope came into my heart and strengthened my hand to continue my work. But after a longer pause than usual I said,

"Dearest papa, are you not very tired? Would it not be better if you gave yourself some rest?"

"Yes, my child," he answered; "I must rest a little. Put the papers away; perhaps I can sleep a little."

My heart sank at the tone of his voice; he himself appeared to feel that his strength was failing. I tried as well as possible to settle his pillows comfortably, put his medicines near him, and left him, at his wish, to rest.

Going to my room, I threw myself into a chair to collect my thoughts; then I knelt down and poured out my heart before the Lord. Colonel von Wertheim had told me of God, of Jesus and his perfect sacrifice, and of the Holy Spirit; he had showed me that the grace of God was full and free—that one could not earn it by works, but must receive it by faith as a gift from God. Although I could not entirely comprehend his words, so new, so strange, so wonderfully different from anything I had heard before, yet I understood something of their meaning. I think my steps were really turned to the opened door of my prison, but the im-

prisonment had made my limbs weak and my eyes easily dazzled. I had so much to learn!

As I opened my German Bible my eyes fell on the third chapter of the Gospel of John. I was well enough acquainted with Old Testament history to understand the allusion to the brazen serpent. How my heart glowed as I read the words, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life!"

Not understanding German well, my progress was not rapid; but the more I read, the greater became my interest, and I did not close the book until darkness compelled me. I had read the wonderful story of the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar, and the wonderful deeds and words of the Lord in the fifth and sixth chapters of John.

When the colonel came back in the even-

ing, I returned him his Bible, in the presence of my father, with hearty thanks. Afterward my father asked me what book it was I had been reading, and I told him the whole truth. He listened in silence; but when I added how much I longed to have him take Jesus as his Saviour, he interrupted me coldly:

“Be still, Lèonie! That is enough. In youth, while the intellect is not developed, it is easy to believe anything. I grant you the sentiments of the Bible are beautiful and suited to those who receive them in simplicity; but at the end of his life a thoughtful man cannot return to childhood. Believe what you wish if it makes you happy, but never expect me to share your views; for even if the Bible, which I have neglected all my life, were true, it is too late for me to believe in it now. So say nothing more about it.”

The words of Jesus—"Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life"—came to me; and the thought that my father was of the number of those who thrust from them the hand of love and grace was very bitter; yet I trusted in the love and power of Jesus to save.

CHAPTER VI.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

I MUST not linger over the particulars of this happy week. Against all expectation, my father recovered, and I had the joy of seeing him again occupied in his usual studies. Our guests troubled us very little; they remained quietly in their own part of the house. Barbara still complained bitterly of the rapid disappearance of our provisions, and prophesied that we would soon die of hunger.

For me these days were bright and cloudless. In the morning I often saw Colonel von Wertheim; after breakfast he rode away with his men, and did not return until late in the evening; and when the day's work was

done, he and my father talked together, while I sat by, a silent listener. Sometimes the conversation turned on religious subjects, and, to my surprise, when these topics were introduced, my father seemed glad instead of avoiding them, as I expected.

It was a great pleasure to me, while the colonel was with us, to have so many opportunities of reading the Bible. Whenever I met him he explained to me what I could not understand; so that every day I learned more and more of holy things. I was very happy; only the thought that our guest might suddenly be ordered away mixed its shadow in the sunny hours of my days.

I scarcely thought of the horror that had spread itself over our land, except occasionally when I heard through Stephen of some sad event. I lived in a bright dream; but, alas! it lasted only a week, and was succeeded by a dreadful reality. When my

father could spare me, I tried to talk to Stephen about those things that filled my heart. But I seldom found him ready to listen. The boy, once so gay and cheerful, was now taciturn, sad and out of humor with himself and with everything. The friendly conduct of Colonel von Wertheim would no doubt have inspired him with respect and liking if he had not been so bitter about the success of the German troops.

The beautiful autumn weather one day tempted me out into the open air. For several months I had not ventured to go any distance from the house, though I longed to climb to the top of the Red Hill and enjoy once more its beautiful view, but to-day I could not deny myself the pleasure of feeling the fresh forest air on my face and of feasting my eyes on the landscape in all its autumn colors.

I had no fear of meeting soldiers, for they

were at the other end of the village; so I started, and after about twenty minutes' walking reached the top of the hill with heart beating and cheeks glowing from the exercise. I did not regret coming, for never had I seen the country looking so beautiful. On all sides the hills rose as far as the eye could reach; now they were in light, now in shadow, as the clouds began to collect in the west. To the left, almost hidden in the trees, lay our little village, behind which the clear, transparent air allowed one to distinguish objects miles away. Most distinctly to be seen of all was the plain, extending out in all directions and bordered by mountain-ridges. But what did I see? Surely some desolating, cruel, destructive power had been at work here. The rich forests, the sunny fields, the sparkling brooks, the blue sky above, everything, was as beautiful as I had ever seen it; but, alas! in the

midst of its glory and splendor was the mark of the destroyer.

I looked across the valley to where the beautiful town of Arlecourt stood on the banks of a little stream, but, instead of the white houses peeping out from the green foliage, I saw a heap of ruins. My heart seemed to stand still, and, trembling in every limb, I sank down on a mossy stone near the wall of an old fort. It all came to me—the anguish, the desolation, the terror, the frightful realities of war; for the first time I saw its cruel footprints. And I had been so happy!

It was long before I could look around me again. Suddenly the wind carried a dull noise to my ear. I looked up, and saw in the distance long lines of soldiers in dark uniform, who seemed to be marching. I saw fallen trees, also, great heaps of ashes, dead horses, broken bridges, while from time

to time the booming of a cannon could be heard and black clouds of smoke rose in the air.

I began to shiver as twilight approached and I could feel no longer the warm rays of the sun; but I did not move until a loose stone from the broken wall fell to the ground near me. Frightened, I arose; and my fear increased as my ear caught the sound of approaching footsteps and I saw through a crevice in the wall the figure of a man in blue uniform coming toward me. But in the next moment my terror was gone, for I recognized Colonel von Wertheim.

“Oh, it is you!” I cried, joyfully.

“Yes, it is I,” he said, smiling. “But, my dear child, what anxiety you have caused by your imprudence! You have exposed yourself to much danger. What made you do this?”

“It has spoiled all my pleasure, for see

there!" I said, sadly, pointing to the burned city. "And do you hear the cannon? Oh, it is terrible!"

He was silent, but I knew how deeply he sympathized with our misfortune.

"Oh," I said, "I could not deny myself the pleasure of seeing that beautiful place in its autumnal loveliness, but I am sorry I came. I have been so happy this week, and forgot the distress and misery of my people."

"You did not know their sorrow and could not sympathize," he answered. "May the Lord grant that you may never learn it! When he gives us sunshine, we should rejoice in it."

"But why does God allow such things?" I asked.

"Shall God, the Creator of heaven and earth, not do right?" he answered. "Look up at those clouds and tell me what you see there."

I looked where he pointed. Dark clouds were massed together, and covered the greater part of the sky. Only one narrow strip at the western horizon was clear, and the edges of the clouds, gilded by the setting sun, formed a great contrast to the heavy, dark masses over our heads.

“Oh how beautiful!” I exclaimed.

“Do you see those clouds—how dark and confused they are,” he said, “when we look at them from the earth? But if we saw them from above, how different it would be! And so it often is with God’s dealings with us. But behind the darkness is light; our faith sees the light on the edges of the cloud, and knows that, though hidden, the sun is still shining.”

While we were talking the clouds had grown heavier, and as we left the wood and commenced to descend an almost perpendicular path the wind was so violent that

conversation was no longer possible. The way was steep and rough; so that it was all I could do to keep myself from falling. When we reached the valley, we were sheltered a little by the hills, but the rain had increased.

My companion had taken my hand, that we might go more quickly. But I wondered why he was so grave and silent. I looked up at him, and saw that his face wore a sad expression. Where were his thoughts? At home with his mother and with Thekla, his sister, doubtless.

My anxious thoughts were interrupted by the discharge of a gun, and almost immediately a ball whizzed close by the colonel's head. Screaming loudly, I clung closer to him. Turning, he looked intently at a bush on our right from which the firing seemed to have come; then he sprang back quickly, at the same time pushing me forward.

“Run, Lèonie, quick, or you will be shot!” he cried.

But I could not go; I felt brave enough to wish to share the danger with him. I held tight to his arm and cried:

“No, no! I cannot leave you alone in danger.”

“Your staying does not make it any safer,” he said, drawing his arm away; “the danger is rather increased by your delay. I will not move a step until you are gone. I beg you to hurry.” In his looks and the tones of his voice there was something I had to obey.

It was all the work of a moment. I turned away; and though my knees trembled under me, my head was whirling and everything seemed dark before my eyes, yet I understood that the safety of my friend depended upon my promptness, and I rushed blindly down the stony path. Presently I heard an-

other shot. Fear made me tremble so that I could hardly keep my footing. Still, I rushed forward as if mad until I reached a wall which separated the hill from the fields.

I could go no farther. I stopped my headlong course ; and, leaning against the wall for support, I looked back with a desperate endeavor to the place where I had left the colonel. At first I saw nothing. Everything danced before my eyes ; a noise as of bells was in my ears ; my heart almost ceased its beating. Then suddenly I saw the tall figure of my friend through the mist which floated before my eyes. In a minute he was at my side.

“Thank God you are safe, my child!” he said.

I could not speak ; my intense excitement had been followed by a complete prostration, and only supported by the colonel’s strong arm could I continue my way homeward. He tried

to comfort me by assuring me that all danger was past. But my tongue seemed paralyzed. I was tired—deadly tired; and not until we reached home did I begin to recover from my fright. At last we passed through the little gate, and I felt myself safe. Yes, as the gate shut behind us and the high garden wall separated us from the road I began to breathe more freely.

Before going into the house I sat down on a bench out in the garden, for the rain had ceased. Colonel von Wertheim came up to me and said, with a kindly smile,

“Poor child! You have certainly been in the fire this afternoon. How little I suspected, when I went to look for you on that hill, that my presence would expose you to such danger!”

“But how did it happen that you came home earlier than usual?” I asked.

“Several reasons brought me back,” he

answered. "I expected to find you, as usual, in the garden, but Pierre told me he had seen you on the road to the Red Hill. As I feared that some scattered troops might frighten you by their sudden appearance, I followed you without thinking that through my presence I would bring you into danger."

"You are very kind," I said. "But what do you think? Who could have fired those shots at us? Was he a— The shot came from that grove, and I fear it was that old—"

"Stop! Tell me nothing," he interrupted.

"But why?"

"You forget that I am a German officer. If I knew the offender, you know what my duty would be."

Yes, I knew it, and so I was silent; but I was sure he had not forgotten the story I had told him of poor old Jacques, the charcoal-burner, whose hut lay just behind that group of trees, and whose two sons had fall-

en in the battle of Wörth. Since the day when the old man had heard the dreadful news he was conscious of but one thought—to revenge himself on the Germans. It was not hard, therefore, to guess whose hand had fired those shots.

“But he fired a second time,” I said; “you were not hurt, were you?”

“Thank God, no,” he answered. “The first shot came very close, but the second was aimed better. Look here;” and he took off his cap and showed me where the ball had made a hole through it.

My cheeks grew pale; I could not speak. Only a half inch more and— Oh, the thought was too dreadful!

For a time nothing was said; then my friend resumed,

“So you see how necessary it was for me to make you leave me. It has been a day of experiences, for this ball was not the

only cause of my anxiety for you and your father. Though I have been sorry to increase your trouble by having my men quartered here, I have the pleasure of knowing that I have been able to shield you somewhat. But I have been ordered now to leave your house to-morrow."

"What! To-morrow!" I cried, in dismay.

"Yes," he answered. "You may have seen from the top of the hill how the valley was filled with soldiers; they are ordered to the south. To-morrow, before daybreak, we are to follow them."

I had certainly been wishing, for my father's sake, that the troops would leave our village; but to separate so suddenly from my friend, to whom I owed so much, was hard—very hard. Tears filled my eyes and rolled in great drops down my cheeks.

"Do not be frightened, child," the colonel said, while his own voice trembled.

"But how can I help it?" I said. "I feel what you have been to me this week: you have showed me the light, led me to Jesus; and now you are going into danger—perhaps to death. I will be alone, and there is nobody to help me."

"I praise the Lord that he has allowed me to lead you to him, and I know that he who has begun a good work in you is able to carry it on. I hope to see you again under pleasanter circumstances; if not, we will meet in heaven. Trust in the Lord; he will never leave you, never forsake you."

"But I will forget," I said; "I have no Bible."

"He will care for that too. I would gladly leave you mine, but it is a present from my dear mother. But I hope to be able to get you a French Bible. Be patient for a few days. But now another thing: you remember that I advised your father to go to

my home during these troublous times, and offered to furnish him with a passport. But I saw it was useless to try to persuade him: he is resolved not to leave home, but you, my poor child—if that which we fear for your father should happen, will you not with your servant go to my mother? How glad my sister would be! I have told them about you, and you will be sure to receive a hearty welcome.”

“But my father is so much better,” I answered.

“He does seem so, and from my heart I hope that you will not need to accept my proposal; but it is best to be prepared. And I beg you not to leave the garden again, for to-day you have seen how dangerous it is.”

“Will you not be exposed to danger?” I asked.

“A soldier does not think of danger,” he

said, smiling. "Besides, my life is in the hands of the Lord."

"Are you sure, then, that God will protect you from being wounded or from dying?"

"Oh no! I do not know how or when my Father will send for me, but I know that nothing can rob me of the life that is hid with Christ in God." With these words he left me and went to talk for a while with my father.

In about an hour I followed, and was surprised at the change in the sick man, he looked so pale and feeble. I did not want to tell him about my adventures, but he asked me so many questions about my absence that I was obliged to recount all. This and the speedy departure of our guest seemed to depress him. I was obliged to leave the room for a while, and on my return found the colonel there; my father

seemed to have recovered his spirits, and was talking brightly. Every allusion to the morrow's leavetaking was avoided, and by common consent no sad thoughts were allowed to embitter these last moments together.

How fast the time flew! The last words were spoken and good wishes exchanged, and I was alone and could weep unrestrainedly. A happy week lay behind me, but now my German friend was going away, perhaps never to return, and the hours of my father's stay with us were evidently numbered. Since my mother died I had no one to whom I could cling; and although my father had turned to me in his last days, yet I still felt in a measure apart from him.

I wept until exhausted; I tried to pray, but only sighs and broken words came. Finally I fell into a troubled sleep, until in the early morning the trampling of horses

beneath my window again roused me to my troubles. I arose, dressed quickly and went to the window. It was still dark; day had not yet broken: I could distinguish nothing except now and then when the light of a lantern shone on some object here and there. I heard Colonel von Wertheim's voice as he gave some order; then they went slowly out of the yard. I listened until the last echo of the horses' feet died away; then I crept back to bed, but could not sleep.

An hour or two later, when I visited my father, I found that he too had passed a restless night; he looked tired and worn. Except Barbara, who appeared happy to return to her accustomed ways, every one seemed dull; the house was silent almost as the grave. Outside it was as depressing as in-doors. A thick fog rose out of the valley; leaden gray clouds covered the sky, and the wind howled dismally through the

trees, stripping them of their few remaining leaves ; the late autumn flowers drooped their heads, as if they no longer had courage to resist our cold climate ; everything conspired to make me miserable. How I longed for some one to comfort me ! True, I had the consciousness of the presence and sympathy of Jesus, but I was still a weak, ignorant child, and I had no Bible. No wonder that my spirits failed.

CHAPTER VII.

MY BIBLE.

ONE morning, after a very unquiet night, my father had fallen asleep almost directly after his early breakfast. I felt unable to bear the stillness of the room, so I softly crept out and tried to quiet my restlessness by walking up and down the corridor and thinking over my happy week, as I called it. As I remembered the teaching of my friend the colonel I could not but feel that I had been doing wrong to yield so to repinings and murmurings.

“Oh, if I only had a Bible!” I sighed; “it would give me comfort now when I so much need it. As long as I could read about Jesus I felt no need, but now I have

nothing—nothing. Oh, I know it is wrong for me to feel so—the Lord is everywhere and spoke to me even before I knew him—but—”

I stopped my walk suddenly; softly I crept down the stairs and went from room to room till I came to my father's study. Since the departure of our guest I had not entered this room. On the table stood a lamp, an inkstand and a book wrapped in paper, upon which I saw my name written. I opened it quickly and with trembling fingers, and found the German Bible of the colonel. I saw a piece of paper between the leaves, and, taking it out, read these words :

“‘He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.’ I leave you, my little friend, my Bible—the gift of my dear mother—until I can find an opportunity to send you another. That the Lord

may bless the reading of his word is the wish of your friend,

“CONRAD VON WERTHEIM.”

My head sank down on the book and my tears fell like summer rain. What a sacrifice had this kind friend made for me! for I felt what it must have cost him even for a time to part with his mother's gift. My heart was full of joy and thankfulness; I no longer felt alone. As I opened the little book my eye fell on passages which the owner had doubtless marked on the last night to comfort my heart. I returned to my father's room with a peace in my soul which never left me in all the sad days that were before me.

Yes, sorrowful days awaited me. My father's illness increased: the long-continued rainy weather seemed to have an injurious effect on his health. For several days he

was delirious, and death seemed very near; then the feeble spark of life that seemed almost extinguished revived, and again he became conscious, but so weak that he could not speak a word.

It was a great pleasure to me during this time to have Stephen with us; he watched with me at my father's bedside and helped me in very many ways. I took courage to tell him how happy I was; and, much to my surprise and relief, he did not ridicule me. On the contrary, he listened attentively and without contradiction when I read to him passages from the Bible. And my father? I had told him what I had found on the study-table, and he seemed pleased, I thought.

One evening, as I sat quietly reading in the sick-room, I heard him sigh deeply, and, looking up, I met his eyes fixed on me with a look of sadness. I went to him quickly and bent over him, saying,

"Papa, dearest papa, if you would only hear about Jesus!"

"Ah, Lèonie," he said, in his weak tones, "it is too late—too late. I have denied him all my life; I could not believe now if I would."

"Oh, papa," I cried, "you believe that the Bible is true; maybe you did not before, but now you know it. And it is not too late. *Now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation. Oh, do let me at least read to you about Jesus. If you will listen to his words, so full of love—if you will hear of his mercy and his compassion—you will certainly believe. Jesus will help you."

The thoughtful, sad expression remained unchanged as with visible effort he replied:

"Oh yes, my child; read what you will. My life has been wasted, my strength is gone; my past is like a shadow behind me, my present offers nothing but misery and

disappointment, and my future is an unwritten page. I have trusted in my reason—alas! a broken staff; I have rejected God, and now it is too late—too late.”

“No, never—never too late for him who has given his life for sinners,” I cried, while tears of joy filled my eyes. “Oh, dearest papa, how I have longed for this moment! If our German friend were here, he would tell you that the light of God had shone into your soul to show you how much you need a Saviour.”

Tremblingly I opened the book and read to him the words of him who spake as never man spake. I did not know enough of the Bible to be able to turn to fitting verses, but I think the Holy Spirit must have guided me, for my father listened with increasing interest; and as, finally, fearing to tire him, I closed the book and wished him “Good-night,” he kissed me and said,

“God bless and keep you, my Lèonie! Sleep sweetly, my child.”

That night he was stricken with paralysis. At first he could speak only a few disconnected words, but he was able to listen to me a little every day as I read the Bible to him and talked to him about my dear Saviour. How much he understood I could not tell, but the brightening of his face, the warm pressure of his hand when I talked to him, and sometimes the motion of his lips, as if he were praying,—all these made me glad. Stephen was often present, but he said nothing. Barbara came in occasionally with a face full of curiosity mixed with suspicion. Once, indeed, she ventured to propose to my father to send for the priest, but he refused so vehemently that she never spoke of it again. Thus three weeks passed without any particular change. Dr. Duprat feared a second stroke, which might prove fatal.

During these days we heard little of the war. From time to time vague and exaggerated rumors of victories, soon followed by stories of disaster and defeat, reached us. Of the fate of our German friend we knew nothing. An indescribable anxiety came over me when I learned from Pierre, our man-of-all-work, that large bands of French soldiers were hidden in the woods to fire at Germans riding by; and in the village there was another band, sworn to kill every German they saw. Only the thought that the life of our friend was in the hands of God kept me up.

One afternoon, toward sunset, I was sitting in my father's room at a window which looked out on the road. My father had fallen asleep, and I sat there with my little Bible on my lap, but I could not read. My thoughts went restlessly from one thing to another until they came to our late guest.

Where could he be? I wondered. That he was still alive I had no doubt. But I thought he might be killed, and that I should soon lose my father; and I remembered how lonely and helpless I was. Lost in these sad fancies, I was suddenly aroused by the sound of horses' feet; looking out eagerly, I distinguished in the twilight the figure of a rider coming toward the house. In another minute I recognized my friend, Colonel von Wertheim; he seemed to be alone.

Hastily putting the Bible in my pocket, I quickly left the room, flew down the stairs and through the courtyard to the gate, and welcomed him in joyful tones. He reached down to shake hands with me, and inquired kindly after my health.

"Oh, sir," I said, "it is such an unexpected pleasure to see you again! How glad my father will be if—" I stopped, for in the joy of my heart I had forgotten every-

thing; and after a while I added: "Ah! my father is very sick—perhaps near death."

"Really, my poor child?" he said, in tones of heartiest sympathy. "How sorry I am not to be able to speak to him! for I can stay only a few minutes. Tell me about him."

I told him all I could about the past weeks, and said in conclusion,

"You see, your trouble and kindness have not been for nothing; he acknowledges the truth of the Bible and listens with great interest when I read to him from it. I think—I hope—he is trusting in Jesus. How good it was of you to leave me your Bible! But you must not be without it longer; I return it to you with very many thanks."

"I have come to exchange Bibles with you," he said, taking his Bible from my hand and in return giving me a copy in French. "But how are you, my little friend?"

You are looking rather pale and tired. Have you felt lonely?"

"Oh no—not since I found your Bible," I answered. "But it seems to me I could not have lived through all these weeks without it. But will you not stay with us a while?"

"No, my child; I have not a moment to lose. I have been sent with important despatches, and, as my way leads through this neighborhood, I could not deny myself the pleasure of seeing my little hospitable hostess, if only for a minute. I will send you a pass to Germany, for I fear you will soon need it. May the Lord be ever near you and protect you! Farewell, my dear little one, until we meet again. Our tired horses will scarcely be able to carry me and my servant through the dark Montville woods to Belfort. But the Lord will be with us."

The dark woods! Had not Pierre told me those woods were full of soldiers?

"Oh no," I said; "you must not take that road."

"But that is the only way."

"Those woods are full of French soldiers," I cried; "it will certainly be your death. I beg you, for your mother, for Thekla's sake. You are risking your life."

"My dear child," he said, gently, "a soldier must obey; but you know that both you and I are under a Captain who says, 'Fear not, for I am with thee.' He has kept me before in great dangers, and he can keep me now if it is his will. We are under his care. And now good-bye once more." In another minute he was gone.

I stood listening until the sound of his horse's feet had died away in the distance; then I went slowly into the house. I found everything quiet there. No one had seen the visitor, and it had all taken place so quickly that, had it not been for my new

Bible, I would have thought the whole thing a dream.

My father was still sleeping, and I again took my place by the window, although the darkness hid the outer world from my view. I could not keep from thinking of the dark woods, for I calculated that by this time my friend had reached the Montville forest.

Suddenly I fancied I heard a dull noise that made my blood run cold in my veins. I distinguished the short, sharp click of a musket; then there was a pause, while my heart seemed to stop its beating, and then another shot. This came distinctly from the woods just outside of the village. I sat there as if stunned, until, by and by, remembering it was time for my father's medicine, I rose and lit the lamp; but, as I saw my father was still sleeping, I would not disturb him.

I returned to my place. I could not pray—could not even collect my thoughts. How

long I sat there I cannot tell; at last I rose and rang for Barbara. I had formed a desperate resolution. As my faithful nurse entered I compelled myself to be quiet, but she was not to be deceived.

"What has happened, dear?" she cried at her first look at my face. "You look as pale as a ghost. Are you sick?"

"No, Barbara, I am not sick," I answered, quietly, "but my head aches a little. Will you stay with my father while I go out for a breath of fresh air? It is so close here!"

What I said was true, and yet not true; for I did not dare tell her of my purpose.

"Yes, yes, my lamb," she said; "the load is too heavy for young shoulders. But I don't know: there is something peculiar about you. You are sure you are not sick?"

"No, no, Barbara! Only let me be for an hour, and do not disturb me. I am not sick; it will soon be over."

But the old woman was only half pacified. She pressed me to take some medicine and begged me to lie down and try to sleep. But, seeing that I was determined, at last she let me go.

With noiseless steps I crept down the stairs and into the kitchen, where I found Pierre and the two maid-servants. I inquired for Stephen, but just as I asked he opened the door and came in. He seemed surprised to see me, but I carried him off to my father's study, and said, the minute the door closed behind us,

"Stephen, I want you to do me a great favor; there will be some danger in it, but I will share it with you. Will you help me?"

I felt I had touched the right chord, for his face brightened:

"Yes, Lèonie; I will do what you want, if it costs me my life."

"I hope it is not so bad as that," I said. "I want you to go with me over the Arle bridge."

"What! over the Arle bridge, Lèonie? Over the bridge at night? Don't you know that the woods are full of soldiers?"

"I know it," I said, "but they will not fire at us, for we are French."

"I have heard shooting all around this evening," he went on.

"Yes, I heard it too," I answered. "But, Stephen, I am afraid the kind gentleman who was here several weeks ago with his soldiers has been wounded by some of those shots."

"What! Colonel von Wertheim, Lèonie? Impossible!" he cried.

"Alas! it is only too possible," I said, "for half an hour ago he rode away from here. I saw him only a few moments, for he had no time to come into the house. His way led through the woods, he said. At the ut-

most he could only have just crossed the Arle bridge when I heard a shot. Our friend may be hurt, and we must not let him die."

"No, we must not let him die," Stephen repeated. "Although he is a German, he is a gentleman and a brave soldier. But, Lèonie, I will call Pierre and he and I can go. You must not; trust it to me."

"I know I can trust you, Stephen, but I could not wait here; and Pierre is too much of a coward to be any good to you. It will be best for you to go to Père Fontaine and ask him to come here. If he is not at home, go to Jules Roche; he is a brave, kind man and will help us. Go quickly. Tell nobody in the house of this. I will wait for you below stairs, at the door."

Stephen hurried off.

I put a small bottle of wine in my pocket, wrapped myself in a cloak and stole quietly

out of the house. The air was icy cold, and the moon shed her light over the open fields, bathing them in silvery brightness.

I had not to wait long; the priest's house was not far from ours, and soon I heard the sound of approaching footsteps. I hastened toward them, for I felt that no one would allow me to carry out my wishes unless it were the kind-hearted old priest, whose darling I had always been. He knew nothing of the change in my religious belief, and I was sure that, even if he had known it, he would not have denied me his assistance.

Stephen had already told him the circumstances, and, as I expected, he begged me to remain at home, with the assurance that he would do everything in his power for the German officer if he found him. Instead of answering, I hurried forward and led the way to a rocky path which would the sooner take us to the bridge.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RESCUE.

IT was a lovely night, but my eyes took little notice of the beauty. I rushed on over the rough path, tiresome and dangerous though it was, with such speed that my companions could hardly keep up with me. Everywhere reigned death-like silence, broken only by my own irregular footfalls.

At last we perceived, at some little distance, a dark object, which on coming nearer proved to be a riderless horse quietly grazing. I saw at the first glance it was not the colonel's. We looked around us for several seconds, but no one spoke a word; then we hastened forward again.

Soon we heard the rushing of the Arle

and saw its waters glistening in the moonlight. Yet a few minutes more, and we had crossed the bridge. As I write down these lines my hand trembles and my heart beats more quickly, but then I was calm and composed. The broad white road, bordered on one side by dark forests, stretched itself out before our eyes.

Just then I fancied I heard a groan, but I paid no attention to it, for at some distance, far up on the hill, under a tree whose branches spread up to the blue heavens and broke the uniformity of the road—there I saw what I sought. Thither I ran, while my two companions, attracted by the groan which we had heard, discovered a wounded man and stopped to help him.

Almost breathless, I reached the spot on the hill where my sharp sight had detected a dark figure lying on a bank of moss; and truly here lay my German friend, his pale

face turned to the moonlight. With hanging head and muscles relaxed, his horse stood near him. The animal looked round with a low whinny as I approached. With a presence of mind which seems wonderful to me now, I knelt by the side of the prostrate figure and laid my hand on his cold forehead. I thought of his words spoken such a little while ago. Was it possible that that life, so strong and vigorous, was no more? No, it could not be. With a glimmer of hope I raised my head and looked steadily at the white, set features. Was it fancy, or was that scarce noticeable twitching of the eyelids and of the pale lips reality? Oh, it was no fancy: he was living. With trembling hands I brought out the wine and poured a few drops between his closed teeth. And, oh joy! he opened his eyes for a second, and a faint sigh came from his lips.

At that moment my companions came up.

"He is not dead; he has opened his eyes," I cried as I saw them start back frightened at sight of the figure lying at their feet.

The priest quickly knelt down by the wounded man to search for the hurt, and soon he discovered a dark hole in the coat, near the shoulder, from which drops of blood were oozing.

"What shall we do now, Lèonie?" said Stephen. "Down yonder is another patient, who, however, Père Fontaine says, is not badly hurt, only weak from loss of blood. How can we get them home? Shall I run to the village and get help? Père Fontaine will stay with you."

"Yes, as quickly as possible," I answered. "But first give this to the poor man down there;" and into a glass I had with me I poured some of the wine.

While talking I heard the noise of wheels;

looking around toward the direction whence this sound proceeded, Stephen cried,

“It is the miller Bertine’s wagon; he had to take provisions to Belfort, and he must be coming back now.”

“That is fortunate,” said the priest. “Go, Stephen; ask him if he will take two wounded men in his wagon.”

Stephen ran, and reached the foot of the hill just as the horses were turning on to the bridge.

“Would it not be better if you would go too, Père Fontaine?” I asked. “Perhaps they will need your help. Do go; I am not afraid to stay alone.”

When he was gone, I took off my cloak and as well as possible wrapped it round the cold figure by me. The movement seemed to rouse him from his stupor, for I saw his eyes open for a second and then close wearily. I put the bottle to his lips,

and now he swallowed a few drops. Then he opened his eyes again, and whispered,

“Lèonie child, what are you doing here? Where am I?”

“You must not speak,” I answered. “You have been wounded, and we are taking you home; the wagon will be here in a minute to carry you to our house.”

He smiled at me brightly, then closed his eyes again.

In a little while, though it seemed to me much longer, the wagon appeared. Fortunately, lying in the bottom there were several empty sacks, out of which we made beds for the wounded men.

After they had been carried to the wagon and made as comfortable as possible, the good priest begged me to get in, but I refused, saying I must go the shortest way home, because no one knew of my absence; and I remembered, too, I had to prepare for

the reception of the colonel and his servant. So, while the wagon moved on slowly with its precious freight, Stephen and I ran with flying feet down the hill. How it was possible to traverse that precipitous path at night and in such haste seems a mystery to me now. Only the thought that we must hurry was all I was conscious of; we neither of us remembered that there was danger in such haste. However, we reached the village at last, and while Stephen ran for the doctor I slipped into the house by the back door and went into the kitchen.

Pierre and the two women-servants gathered round me exclaiming at my appearance. I had forgotten what a figure I must present. My dress was soiled with mud from top to bottom; my hair hung down my back in disorder. Without cloak or hat, pale from excitement, and breathless with running, I stood before them.

I explained everything in as few words as possible, and ran up stairs to my own little room. Here I hastily changed my dress, arranged my hair and went down to my father. As I entered, Barbara was giving him his medicine. He smiled at me, murmured a few unintelligible words and relapsed again into his usual semi-unconscious state, between sleeping and waking.

I beckoned Barbara to follow me into my room; her sharp eyes had already seen that something extraordinary had occurred, and as quickly as possible I told her our adventures.

But she interrupted me in great excitement:

"What, Miss Lèonie! You went over the Arle bridge at night? How dreadful! And the good colonel: is he really wounded? Is he much hurt?"

"I do not know," I replied; "we must

hope for the best. But, Barbara, they will soon be here, and the doctor too. If you will see that all is ready for them, I will go in and stay with my father. Has he asked for me?"

"Ah, no, my lamb; he has slept constantly. But you go to him. Depend on old Barbara; she will do it all right for you."

As she turned away I heard her murmur, "Poor motherless lamb! in a little while you will be fatherless too." Her words fairly stunned me. Was my father so sick, then? Was his life really in danger? I hurried to his room to convince myself that he was really living, but he looked just the same to me. He was sleeping quietly as a child as I again took up my station by his bedside. In a few moments the chambermaid brought me my supper, prepared so daintily by my faithful Barbara.

Then, in a little while, I heard wheels,

then the stopping of the cart before our door, followed by heavy footsteps in the rooms below.

After a long interval, Barbara came back with the good news that the colonel was better and quite conscious, that Dr. Duprat said he must have perfect rest, and that nothing should be told my father that night. She informed me, too, that the priest had taken the other wounded man to his own house, saying that two sick people were enough for us.

The rest of the evening passed as usual.

My father woke and raised himself in bed ; he seemed to be stronger than he had since his attack. He talked a little, and, noticing at last that I looked pale and tired, he sent me to bed. The tenderness of his tone as he wished me "Good-night," the deep earnestness with which he listened as I read to him a few verses from my new Bible, and

the smile he gave me as I turned at the door once more to wish him "Good-night,"—all this remained a bright spot in my memory. I was tired and exhausted, and fell asleep almost before my head touched the pillow.

The sunlight was streaming brightly into my room when I opened my eyes the next morning; a servant stood by my bed with a cup of chocolate for me, but she looked so pale that I was frightened.

"Oh, Victoria," I cried, "how is my father? Tell me."

To my great alarm, she began to cry.

"Something has happened. I must go to him," I said. "Tell me: he is not dead?"

"No, not dead, miss; but he is a great deal worse than he was yesterday. He has had another stroke; he is quite unconscious. But oh, miss, I forgot: Barbara told me not to tell you anything until you had had your chocolate. What will she say to me?"

I comforted her, saying that I was very glad to hear it now, and, refusing the chocolate, dressed myself hurriedly.

When I got out into the hall I saw the doctor leaving my father's room; his face was very grave as he took my hands and answered, for he read in my face the question I could not ask. I do not remember his words, but I know he told me in tenderest, most sympathizing words that he feared my father could not live through the day.

But he had mistaken. Slowly the hours dragged themselves along; the sick man lay there motionless and unconscious. No one could do anything for him, but I sat by his bedside and watched him. Was he really to leave this world without a parting word, and without any sign that even in the eleventh hour he had taken the Lord Jesus as his Saviour?

About noon there came a low knock at the

door: it was a message from the colonel—just a few words written in pencil:

“‘God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;’ ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you;’ ‘If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.’”

How full of comfort those words were, coming just when I most needed comfort!

Evening came on, and night, and still there was no change; the midnight hour found me still watching. I began to hope that the Angel of Death would again pass by, and that my father might be spared—at least, until he had learned to trust in Jesus as his Saviour.

Slowly passed the hours of the night; the gray dawn was spreading over the wooded hills when my father suddenly opened his eyes and looked round at us. He seemed perfectly sensible, and tried to speak. At

first his efforts were in vain, but at last he managed to whisper,

“Barbara, do not forget what I told you. —Lèonie, my child, my darling child, God will protect you—will care for you. I give you—to him.” Then his eyes closed again.

But I cried,

“Papa, papa! only one word more. Tell me: is the darkness gone? Is there light in the dark valley?”

Once again he opened his eyes. A smile played over his features; and as I bent over him to catch his last words he whispered, feebly but distinctly, “Yes—Jesus,” and with these words his spirit returned to God who gave it.

That was a sad time for me. Now, when it is all behind me in the past, I can say, “He doeth all things well; I know it, I believe it.” But still the wounds have not ceased bleeding. I feel, as I write down

this history of my life, all the pain afresh. But I know that every bitter affliction has brought me nearer to Jesus; his love is more to me than all I have lost. I have given my treasures to him, and they are not lost, but gone before.

Barbara led me out of the room when all was over and put me to bed, as if I were still a little child. I could not weep. My father was with Jesus: that was my only thought. I soon fell asleep, for I had spent twenty-four hours at my father's bedside, and exhausted nature demanded rest.

It was noon before I opened my eyes and saw Barbara standing by my bed. The good faithful soul! I have said but little about her in my narrative, and yet how constant, how full of love, was her tender care of me! I can never forget her. How she tried in those days to lighten my trouble! Now she had brought me a tempting meal; and when,

to please her, I had eaten a little, she told me the colonel wished, if it were possible, I would come to see him, as he could not come to me.

I was glad to go, and dressed myself quickly; but first I must stop in my father's room. At the first sight of that prostrate figure, a sense of what I had lost came over me. I sank upon my knees and wept until I could weep no more. At last Barbara came to remind me that the colonel was waiting, and carried me off with her.

The nurse whom Dr. Duprat had engaged opened the door at my knock and invited me to come in. The sick man stretched out his hand to me and said in sorrowful tones,

“Lèonie, my poor child!”

The pale face, the trembling voice and the warm pressure of his hand again brought the tears.

“My dear Lèonie,” he began, when I was

a little quieted, "your loss is very great, but we need not sorrow as those without hope. Did you not tell me your father had begun to think as you do?"

"Oh yes," I said; "if it were not so, I could not bear it. In his last hours Jesus was with him; he bore witness to that."

"Then, my child, we should not grieve because he has reached home before us. The separation is bitter, but the meeting will be sweet."

Comforting as his words were, I could not control my sorrow, though I tried hard to suppress my sobs, until I noticed how dry and hot his hand was, and how flushed his face with fever.

"Oh, sir," I cried, frightened, "how unkind I have been! I forgot you were so sick and suffering; I thought only of myself and my trouble. Do forgive me."

"My dear child, your affliction is greater

than my pain ; it is hard for me to see you weep without being able to comfort you. But let your tears flow unrestrainedly ; you will be the better for it."

But I had become alarmed at his feverish looks, and the lines in his forehead showed that the pain was increasing.

"I see you are in great pain," I said. "What can I do for you? Shall I call the nurse?"

"No ; stay where you are. If you could bathe my forehead, I would be obliged."

I dipped a sponge in water and laid it on his hot head ; it seemed pleasant to him, and after he had refreshed himself with a cool drink he said,

"I thank you, little one ; may God bless you ! You saved my life yesterday ; if you had not come to look for me, I must have died there. Miller Bertine said if he had been alone he would not have taken us

Prussian dogs into his wagon, but he wanted to please the priest; and Dr. Duprat told me that if you had come half an hour later it would have been too late. Yes, Lèonie, under God, I owe my life to you; and I cannot understand how you, so young and generally so timid, should expose yourself to such danger."

I could not answer him; the little I had done seemed so trifling when I remembered this man was the only friend I had in the world.

"Will you tell me something of your father?" he continued; "or do you not feel strong enough?"

I was glad to comply with this request; and though the tears were rolling down my cheeks, yet it was a pleasure for me to tell him of the great change in my father's views, and I saw in my friend's face how his heart rejoiced over the good news.

“I so much desired to tell him of your accident,” I said, “but the doctor said he must have no excitement, and afterward there was no opportunity. It would have been a comfort to him to know that his child had a friend and helper here.”

“‘A helper,’” he said, sadly. “Ah, Lèonie, what can I, helpless myself, do for you except to commit you to the care of him who is a Father to the fatherless?”

At this moment the nurse returned; her practised eye immediately detected the feverish symptoms in her patient.

“Pardon me, miss,” she said, “if I beg you not to stay longer; for, as I feared, the gentleman has been talking too much. His fever is much higher.”

The colonel was commencing to remonstrate, but she cut him short; and I made my escape and went into my father’s room and knelt down by the bed on which he lay.

So Barbara found me, and she led me away. All the rest of the day she exerted herself to comfort me. She wept with me and informed me that my father, feeling his end near, had told her that he had consented to the colonel's wish to send me to Germany under safe protection, to remain until the end of the war; and for this purpose he had given her a sum of money. He had also said that as quickly as possible after his death she should make her preparations to start, and, above all, to tell Colonel von Wertheim of his wish. Barbara declared she had made up her mind to accompany me wherever I went; and, amid all my sorrow, I could not help feeling glad at the prospect, and grateful for my father's care for me.

The day passed on, and before the next night a new grave had been dug next to my mother's, and the body of my father laid there under the sod.

CHAPTER IX.

SORROW.

THE house seemed very quiet and still after the excitement of the funeral.

What a comfort to me in those days was my Bible! and it was such a pleasure now and then, as our guest was able to bear it, to talk with him over the things we both loved. A journey to Germany was not to be thought of now, but he hoped, when his strength returned a little, to obtain a furlough and go home to recuperate. His fever was decreasing daily, and, although the physicians had not yet been able to extract the ball, he felt less pain—at least, he never complained and his eyes were clear and his face was cheerful. During this time he told me much of his

mother and his sister Thekla, of his home and his childhood days, until I felt as well acquainted with his home as if I had been there for years.

So one day passed after another without change in his condition. The physician would not allow him to be moved, even to be propped up in bed. The wound had healed quickly, but the ball could not be found; Dr. Duprat was waiting impatiently for the time when the colonel's servant would be strong enough to go to Belfort and bring a renowned German physician to consult with him. At last the man was pronounced well enough to travel, and, provided with letters from the colonel, started on his journey.

The next afternoon I saw from my window four German soldiers alighting before the house. My heart beat quickly, but the hope that the pain of the operation, if they de-

cided that was necessary, would be short, and that recovery would speedily follow, quieted me; and I ran to the sick man's room to tell him who had come.

"That is good," he said, brightly, and then continued, looking at my rather sad face, "Can you not trust me in the hands of our heavenly Father?"

"I cannot bear to think that you must suffer," I confessed.

"What!" he said; "is that the little heroine who a short while ago went through the woods at night to save the life of a poor wounded man?"

Before I could speak again Barbara came to announce that a German physician and three officers had arrived, and that the former begged to see his patient soon, as his time was limited.

I left the room with Barbara, and in the hall met our own doctor coming up with

the stranger. How formidable he looked! My nurse went back with them, and I, feeling desolate and forlorn, wandered off to my own room; but I could not stay there quietly, so I stole down the stairs, intending to see about some supper for the patient as soon as the doctors were gone, but instead I went into my father's study. Here I waited in indescribable anxiety; yet before it seemed possible my ear caught the sound of a door opened, then shut; of softly-spoken words, and then footsteps on the stairs. Yes, they were coming to the study. I jumped up and ran to the window, where heavy curtains completely hid me from view. Why I did this I do not know; perhaps I feared to let them see my distress, perhaps there was an unacknowledged dread of what their tidings might be. It was all the work of a minute.

Scarcely was I in my hiding-place when

the door opened and the two physicians came in. I heard Dr. Duprat say,

“Then there is no hope, you think?”

“None—not the slightest,” was the reply.

“You have had more experience than I,” continued our own doctor; “tell me truly: could anything have been done before? Would it have been possible to extract the ball earlier?”

“Impossible,” answered the other. “This sort of wound is too extended and too far out of our reach. Death is the inevitable consequence. You see—” Then followed a long technical explanation, while I sat and listened breathlessly.

I listened, and understood all; I heard the death-knell of all my earthly hopes. It seemed a lifetime while I sat there, but at last the two gentlemen exchanged compliments and polite words, and the conversation was at an end. They left the study

and went to join the three officers in the drawing-room.

I cannot describe my feelings. I did not faint or cry out, but quietly and gravely I left the room and mounted the stairs. In the upper hall I saw Dr. Duprat walking up and down and looking very sad. He did not speak to me. I went to my own room and threw myself on the floor in an agony of pain and despair. Wild, rebellious thoughts were in my heart. Father and mother had been taken from me, and now the friend whom I thought God had sent me to make up for their loss. How long I lay there I do not know; time went by unnoticed. Suddenly I remembered the doctors had said their patient could not live many days. I must spend these last hours with him; there would be time enough to cry afterward. I bathed my hands and face in cold water, and then sank upon my knees with the prayer,

“Lord, help, or I perish.” And he did help; it was his power that strengthened me so wonderfully that I could not only bear my trouble, but was able to hide it from the eyes of my dying friend. I felt it was my duty to make these last days of his life bright, and the Lord gave me power to do it.

It seemed to me hours had passed in the little while I had been away from the sick-room; when I returned to it I was received with the same kind smile as ever, but I guessed, by a certain gravity that underlay the smile, that the colonel knew all. And this thought again robbed me of my composure. I knelt down by the bed and hid my face. Neither of us spoke, until after a little the sick man's voice broke the silence, though he did not speak to me, but to him who alone is able to help; and as he prayed the storm in my heart quieted itself under those earnest words of submission and

trust. After that he talked to me—talked a little about the separation from those he loved, but more of the time when we would all meet in the presence of Jesus. But he was evidently much weaker; he no longer tried to hide his pain from me, for he knew that my knowledge of how he suffered would make it easier for me to let him go where all tears shall be wiped away and where there shall be no more pain. What the German doctor had told him had been no surprise; it had only confirmed what he had already conjectured. He was perfectly ready to go, and seemed even happy at the call.

Even Barbara felt this, and wondered.

“If this is heresy,” she said, “it is a soft pillow to die on.”

Two or three days after the German doctor had been present and gone, two soldiers came with letters for the colonel—letters for

which he had been longing. The men came up to his room, and while I waited outside and sealed a letter, partly written by the colonel and partly dictated by him, I heard the earnest words of advice and entreaty of the dying man to his friends.

When they left the room, I went back; and the first thing that met my eyes on entering was a letter with a black border and sealed with black lying on the table by the bed.

"Oh," I cried, "has anything happened?"

The colonel opened his eyes and smiled at me—an unearthly smile, it seemed to me—as he said,

"There is one less on earth to mourn for me, Lèonie: my dear mother is gone before me. I will see her in heaven."

"What! your mother?" I cried.

"The Lord has taken her to himself," he said, "and I thank him for it. She has en-

tered into rest, and will not have to weep for my loss; death will take me to her."

"But Thekla—poor Thekla?" I asked.

For a moment a shadow passed over his face; then he said,

"Even for Thekla this sorrow will work for good; she too belongs to the Lord, and he will make up to her a hundredfold the loss of mother and brother. You must go to her and stay during the war; she will be a sister to you. Do not mourn for me; the separation will not be for long. I had hoped to take you to my home, but in his love and wisdom the Lord has ordered it differently. He does not need me to protect you. I have soon reached the end of life; in a little while I will be with Jesus in our real home. Will you not be glad for me, Lèonie?"

"Oh yes," I answered, "I am glad for you and your mother, but I think of myself and your sister Thekla."

I stopped, for I saw he was very tired; and we were both silent for some time, until, looking at him, I saw he had fallen asleep. In about half an hour he wakened and asked me to read the other letters to him. There were four of them, each of a different date. One was from his mother, written several weeks before her death; the others were from Thekla, the first full of happiness: she had received a letter from her betrothed, Karl Erhardt, from whom nothing had been heard for some time. He had been wounded he wrote to her, but was perfectly well again, and was now with the army of the crown prince before Paris. In another letter she spoke of her increasing fears for her mother's health and wished longingly for her brother. The third told of the mother's death and begged him to come, if only for one day. Alas! the poor girl little knew how soon she would lose her brother also.

From this time on the sick man's weakness forbade any conversation; the end was rapidly approaching. One evening, after I had bade him "Good-night," he stopped me as I was leaving the room, and said to Barbara,

"Let her stay with me to-night, nurse."

Instantly I knew what he was expecting, but I returned to my seat without remark.

Slowly the hours went by. I felt no weariness; my thoughts were centred on my dying friend. His weakness was too great to allow him to talk, but his countenance expressed the peace that filled his soul. Once more he looked at me with a half smile; then his eyes closed, and with a low sigh he was gone.

Stunned and almost unconscious, I continued to sit there looking at that quiet face. The loud sobbing of Barbara I heard as one in a dream, but when she tried to take me

from the room I roused myself and attempted to go over to the bed; but everything grew black before me, and in a dead faint I sank on the floor.

What remains for me tell? After the funeral the house seemed so dull and my life so empty that I do not like even to think of those days. Barbara, Stephen and Dr. Duprat did all they could to comfort me, but their words had no effect.

One day Barbara reminded me that it had been the wish of my father, and of Colonel von Wertheim also, that we should not stay in France during the war, but when she began to make preparations for the journey I remembered that the colonel had told me we would have to wait for our passport, which a German officer was to send to us. To me it seemed so soon to leave the place where my mother, father and friend lay that I rejoiced over the delay.

We dismissed two of the servants, and Stephen, Pierre, Barbara and I were left alone in the lonely house. My old nurse was like a mother to me during all this time, and it is a pleasure to me to remember that she, as well as my cousin, listened with increasing interest when occasionally I read to them from my Bible. Stephen never made any remark, but I saw a great change in him; he had been more quiet and more thoughtful ever since my father's death. As for Barbara, she still clung to the ceremonies of the Romish Church, but I do not doubt she had learned to know him whom to know is eternal life. She liked to hear of Jesus as the Good Shepherd who had given his life for the sheep. Her father had been a shepherd, and her childish days had been spent on the hills among the sheep. This made it easy for her to understand the love of the Lord for his own. And I? The sharp edge

of my trouble had been somewhat dulled, yet many times I was very unhappy. The Bible was a great comfort, but I was very ignorant and there was no one to teach me. When the weather allowed I went to the cemetery to the three graves, but most of the time I sat in my father's study. I felt alone—ah, so alone! The world had no attraction for me, and heaven seemed very far off.

One day a letter came for me from Thekla; it was full of expressions of the bitterest sorrow and tender compassion—the first for her brother, the last for me. She begged me to come to her as soon as possible; she was very lonely, and it would be a comfort to her to have me.

Barbara was much gratified by this letter, and Dr. Duprat, too, convinced that leaving a neighborhood that must continually awaken sad memories would be good for me, advised

our going soon ; so, although I knew neither time nor place would make me forget my trouble, I resisted no longer. Indeed, as our passport had arrived, there was no longer pretext for delay.

Barbara planned that Stephen and Pierre should remain behind, while she herself would accompany me, then come back and so arrange everything that it would be easy, after the war was over, for me to return and take possession of my property. I knew the old ruined castle could no longer be my home. Yet the thoughts of men are not always the thoughts of God ; I needed more than a change of residence to rouse me from my despondency and make me fit for my work in the world.

On one cloudy December morning I went out, as usual, alone to the graveyard. Only a few days remained before our departure. I leaned against the large old walnut tree

under whose branches were the graves of my three loved ones, and read again the inscriptions on the simple wooden crosses which marked the resting-places of my parents and our German friend. Mourning—yes, almost murmuring—over my hard fate, I threw myself on the cold sod. I had never felt so lonely, so forsaken, as in that moment. I knew that death lurked in the cold, damp ground on which I lay, but it was death I sought; I would perhaps have found it if some one had not raised me and bade me go home. It was the old priest, Père Fontaine. The window of his study overlooked the graveyard, and, sitting there, he had seen me. He led me to the road, and, to my surprise, I saw it filled with soldiers. I noticed, too, that the whole village seemed to be in a stir and excitement. They were French soldiers, and a hasty glance showed me that the road to my home was completely blocked;

but the priest led me to one side, where, with some trouble, he climbed over the wall of the cemetery. I followed him, and he conducted me in great haste over a field which divided us from the old castle. He left me as soon as he had seen me slip into the garden through a little door, bidding me go quickly into the house. I obeyed, fearing I hardly knew what.

Barbara was preparing food for about twenty soldiers that were in the house. There was an unusual noise and tumult both inside and out; but, shunning the soldiers, I went to my father's study, where my Bible lay upon the table. Opening it, my eye fell on the words: "And she [Mary] knew not that it was Jesus." These words seemed just to describe me. Like Mary, blinded by my tears, I had not recognized him who with pierced hands and feet stood by my side, and like her I sank at his feet with the

cry, "Rabboni! Master!" And while I hid my face before him and poured out my anxious heart the scales fell from my eyes. I saw him near me—him who had given his life for me and promised to love me till the end. I recognized the sin and the unbelief of my selfish grief. And now first I felt that my life belonged to him who had offered his for me, and I laid my trouble, my life—myself—at his feet, to let him do with me as he would. Truly, this hour would be one to remember through my whole life, even without the aid of the events that followed it.

The noise I had noticed before had increased, but I remained on my knees until the door was thrown violently open and several soldiers entered. I sprang to my feet and looked at them inquiringly. At sight of me they stopped, and one of their number advanced, saying,

“Pardon us for interrupting you; but if you will be so good as to go to the back of the house, you will find it safer there.”

Before I could collect my thoughts to answer, Barbara rushed in.

“Not here—not here!” she said to the soldiers. “Leave at least this room alone. Do you not see the young lady is here?” and, while she held the open door with one hand, she seized the nearest man by the shoulder and pushed him out into the hall. The others hesitated a moment; then they followed, and Barbara shut and bolted the door after them.

“What is it, Barbara?” I asked as she turned to me and clasped me close in her arms.

“Oh, my child, it is too terrible! Oh, if the good colonel were but here! How can I save you, my darling? Oh, my poor little lamb!”

“But, dear Barbara,” I said, “God is with us. Tell me: what is the matter? Will there be a battle?”

“Yes,” she answered; “some of our soldiers are down in the village, and they say the Germans are advancing to attack them; and I am sure they will come to our house first. The men here have guarded every window. I could not come to you before, and now it is too late. We cannot possibly get away, and I do not know that it is any better anywhere else. Oh, if you were only safe in Germany!”

CHAPTER X.

KARL ERHARDT.

OUR situation was indeed frightful. The thought that we two helpless women—one of us, indeed, only a child—were in the very midst of the strife terrified me; but I knew where to look, and that gave me courage.

“Dear Barbara,” I said, “will a shepherd leave his sheep alone and unprotected when the wolf comes or a storm breaks over them? And will Jesus, the Good Shepherd—our Shepherd, yours and mine, Barbara—leave us in our need?”

She covered her face with her apron and sobbed aloud. I opened my Bible and read to her the twenty-third psalm. Scarcely had

I ended when the fighting began. We heard a loud word of command; then followed the firing of muskets, the clash of arms, loud groans and cries, and at last the thunder of the cannon. At every discharge the house creaked in all its joints. I was crouching in a corner of the big sofa; Barbara sat by me holding my hands in hers. She did not speak, but I saw her lips moving as if she prayed. Several balls whizzed through the room; then suddenly there was comparative quiet. The shooting seemed to be farther off.

Barbara rose and went to the window, though I begged her not.

"It is over. Our troops have yielded, I think," she said.

Then suddenly the firing began again; it was evident some of our troops were in the house, and were firing at the enemy.

In the next minute these shots were re-

turned. A ball crashed through the window, and Barbara—my good, faithful Barbara—fell senseless to the floor. I ran to her, bent over the prostrate form and called her name, but in vain. What should I do? I had no remedies at hand. Confused and stunned, I sat several minutes on the floor holding her head in my arms.

I still hoped life would return; but, as there were no signs of returning consciousness, I felt I must seek help. I laid her head as gently as possible on the floor, and, trusting in God to protect me, I opened the door. A cloud of smoke greeted me: our house was on fire. I ran to the stairs; soldiers were hurrying hither and thither to save what they could from the flames.

“Help! help!” I cried. “Up here is a wounded woman: will no one help her?”

Two soldiers answered my cry and followed me into the room where Barbara lay.

The smoke was suffocating; the other end of the house was in flames, which were being rapidly driven toward the stairs. I seized my Bible, my precious gift; there was no time to save more—no time even to take a last look at the room, now filled with smoke, which held so many sacred remembrances for me.

“Hurry, miss, or it will be too late,” one of the soldiers said.

“Follow me,” I cried; and the two men, carrying the helpless Barbara between them, obeyed.

Hastily descending the stairs, I led them into one of the back rooms, hoping to escape by the window into the garden, but the flames met us on the threshold. Then we tried the kitchen; there also the fire raged. I quickly turned to a narrow passage-way leading to the vegetable garden, and fortunately we were able to pass through this.

At some distance from the burning house they laid their burden on the grass. One of the soldiers bent over her.

"She is dead," he said, in broken French. "You can do nothing more for her. Think now of your own safety."

"Dead!" I repeated; "dead! Oh, Barbara, Barbara! But are you quite certain of it?"

The young soldier bent his head and touched a round blue spot on her temple.

"I have seen too much of this to be mistaken," he said. "Can we do anything for you? Shall we call your servants?"

"Oh no," I answered; "I do not know how you can help me;" for I knew that Stephen was away and knew nothing of this misfortune. But I remembered I had seen nothing of Pierre, and inquired for him.

"We will look for him and send him to you," he answered. "Ah! now we must

leave you;" for just then the sound of a trumpet was heard.

But it was a long time before help came. I sat on the cold, damp grass holding the lifeless head of my old nurse on my lap. My parents and my kind friend lay in the grave; the good Barbara, who had been to me as a mother, had left me; my home, the place where my childhood days had been spent, had become a prey to the hungry flames. Yet under all this I was not depressed, as I had been in the morning. Strength had come to my weakness, peace to my wretchedness. I felt that my weak hand was in the powerful grasp of him who had said to me, "Fear not, for I am with thee;" and I rested quietly until help came.

The air was heavy and full of smoke; the short December twilight began to make way for the night; now and then flakes of snow fell; and I was still alone. It was impossi-

ble for me to leave my poor dead nurse, although she needed my help no more.

Just then the roof of the house fell in with a loud crash, sending out a cloud of smoke and sparks. For some time longer the raging flames shot upward as if seeking for fresh prey, but gradually they died away; and I knew now that all was over. My old home was no more; all my father's books, all his manuscripts, the work of long years,—all were destroyed. I had saved nothing but my Bible. I was perfectly conscious of all I had lost, but all my care I laid upon him who careth for me.

At last, just as I had begun to wonder if Pierre too could be dead, he came. The poor man, at the beginning of the fighting, had hidden himself in one of the outbuildings, and had remained there until it was all over. He had been searching everywhere for Barbara and me—had even gone to the village

to inquire. He had met the priest, who had heard from one of the soldiers that helped me of a young lady up at the castle who needed assistance; after a long search they had found me and my nurse. The two carried her carefully into the parsonage; I followed slowly. When I reached the house, the housekeeper took possession of me, gave me a hot drink to ward off cold, and sent me to bed. Exhausted by sorrow and excitement, I soon fell into a deep sleep, and for several hours forgot all my troubles.

Early the next morning, when I wakened and remembered the occurrences of the previous day, the tears came again, but with the tears came words of prayer:

“Lord, thou hast taken all from me—my parents, my teacher, my home, my old friend—but thou thyself art still with me. Thou knowest my sorrow, my loneliness. I have no one but thee, and thou art sufficient for

me. Teach me the way I should go; show me what I can do for thee." This prayer has been heard and answered; peace came to me, and since that time I have always experienced the love that comforts me, the grace that strengthens me and the power that upholds me.

I could not go to sleep again; and when I rose from my bed, though the sadness had not gone, yet my soul was full of peace and ready to live and to work, to wait and to stand fast.

And I soon learned what my work was. As I left my room on this morning and went down stairs my ear caught the sound of groans. The priest's old servant, who met me in the hall, led me, in answer to my inquiries, into a little room, where, to my astonishment, I saw several wounded soldiers lying on hastily-made-up beds on the floor.

I had spent so much of life lately by the

sick-bed that it came natural to me to help these, who seemed to me in such sore need of help. I went from one to the other, giving a drink to one or a word of cheer to a second. I think that the Lord led me through the way of suffering that I might be able to help other suffering ones. I determined then to devote myself to nursing the sick, and, although so young, I had had more experience than many older persons.

The next day I told Père Fontaine of my resolve. The old man begged me not to think of such a thing, reminding me of my youth and my inexperience in such difficult work. But I felt that the Lord had pointed out this way for me, and that, in spite of my weakness and ignorance, he would use me for his service.

Three days after the funeral of my old nurse I went with Dr. Duprat to an army hospital about three miles from our village,

intending to go northward from there to the centre of the war. To be sure, there were plenty of wounded in our own neighborhood; but there was no lack of willing hands and kind hearts to help them, and I heard from the soldiers how sadly nurses were needed in other places. Therefore I joyfully accepted Dr. Duprat's proposal to accompany him, without waiting even to say "Farewell" to my loved ones. Perhaps it was as well to go away suddenly, for there was enough trouble to meet, without giving myself fresh pain.

The day before my departure Stephen returned. His astonishment was unbounded at finding our house in ashes; and when he learned my purpose of becoming a nurse, he used all his powers of persuasion to induce me to go with him instead to Havre, to some relatives of his whom he had been visiting. They had sent me a warm invitation to come

to them, and I would gladly have gone had I not been convinced it was my duty to stay ; as it was, it cost me a hard struggle to refuse him. I gave him my Bible—for the colonel had left me his little German one—and begged him to read and study it. I promised him to write punctually, and we parted with heavy hearts.

Before leaving the village I wrote to Thekla, telling her what had occurred and my motive for delaying my visit to Germany, and promising to come as soon as my work at home was finished. I felt sure, I wrote, that she would understand my feelings and sympathize with me.

Arrived at our destination, I soon found my hands full ; everywhere I met wretchedness and misery which far surpassed my expectations. But the Lord gave me strength and courage, and, although sometimes heart and spirit failed, I felt his arm supporting me.

My life, though a hard one, was not without its pleasures. It was a joy to point souls trembling and frightened at the approach of death to Jesus the Saviour of sinners. My work seemed very trifling, when there were so many needing help; but should the drop of rain murmur because it refreshes only one flower? Oh no! If only one had learned to trust in Jesus, it would have been reward enough.

We went from one place to another, and stayed longest where we seemed most needed. My heart was sad at the sight of so many youthful lives sacrificed. I remember especially one delicate pale face with large bright eyes, his fair hair all stained with blood. I shall never forget the look he gave me as I told him of what was coming, or the tone in which he cried, "Who will tell my mother?" Poor boy! poor mother! I wonder who told her of her boy's death?

Unknown, but not unmourned, we buried him away from mother and home.

The war was over at last; but looking at the many graves, remembering the countless widows and orphans, the burned cities and villages, the wasted fields and meadows, the word "peace" seemed to me like mockery. The proud neck of France had bent before the power of the victors, but in the hearts of many of the conquered hatred and revenge still burned fiercely.

At this time I was just outside of Paris. My strength was well-nigh exhausted; I was beginning to feel the extraordinary strain of the last four months; but there was still much to do. With failing strength I worked on. One thing was very good for me: I had no time to think of my own trials, the present pleasure of alleviating the sorrows of others filling all my thoughts. I had written several times to Thekla, and longed

more and more to go to her; for through her letters I had learned to love her very dearly.

One morning, as I took my usual round through our temporary hospital, I noticed a strange face; without knowing why, I felt myself attracted by it, and was very glad to learn that his wounds were not fatal: he had been hurt by the accidental discharge of a gun after peace had been declared. Although he did not complain, he was evidently troubled by the delay caused by his injuries, which hindered his leading his regiment home.

After the doctor had examined and dressed his wounds, I accompanied him to the other patients. How large was the number of the wounded! Everywhere I saw faces flushed with fever—faces whose features plainly showed that for them peace had come too late. Occasionally the doctor awakened a

bright look of joy when he declared some wound nearly healed and recovery near. After he had left the hospital and I had helped the other nurses to care for the rest, I took my Bible, as usual, and read a little to those who were able to listen. Sitting near the bed of the new arrival, I presently heard a faint call from a patient at the other end of the room: it was a man whose injuries were past human skill to heal. As I rose to go to him the stranger said,

“Would you kindly lend me that book while you are away, if you please? I would like to read a little for myself.”

For a moment I hesitated, feeling a strange reluctance to trust in strange hands the precious and only remembrance of my kind friend. But the next minute I rebuked my selfishness and handed him the Bible. The look of pleasure with which he received it convinced me that its contents were not un-

known to him, and reconciled me to his having my book.

I stayed some time with the dying man, though there was little I could do for his bodily comfort; but God put words in my mouth to speak to him. I told of him whose blood cleanses from all sin and whose grace can save even in the eleventh hour, and I had the joy of seeing his face grow calm. His forehead smoothed itself, his head lay quietly back on the pillow, and with the Name that is above every name on his lips he fell asleep. I saw that Death was not far off, for lately I had too often seen his footprints to be deceived.

When I went back for my Bible, the stranger, instead of giving it up, pointed to the title-page, saying,

“Tell me, I beg you, miss, how you got this book. Where is my friend Von Wertheim, whose name I read here?”

The sound of that name, so long unheard, for a moment took from me all power to answer; but, seeing his anxiety, I tried to compose myself, and said softly,

“He is where he will need that no more—with the Lord.”

“Dead?” he cried; “my friend dead? No, it is not possible. What you say cannot be.”

In his excitement he had raised himself in his bed, and I hastened to say,

“Indeed, yes; he is no longer among the living.”

“Are you certain? How can you know? Have you seen him?”

“Yes,” I said.

He sank back upon his pillow and covered his face with his hands. Had my words sounded cold and harsh? I wondered.

For all the world I could not have spoken differently. Several minutes passed before

he spoke again; finally he looked up and said,

“This news robs me of half my pleasure in returning home. Ah! for him there is no more sorrow or trouble, but for me and for—”

His emotion was too great to allow him to continue, but presently he went on:

“Pardon me, but the blow is so sudden! He was my dearest friend, and I loved him as a brother; I know no one in the world like him. You said you saw him die: where was it? Pray tell me, if it will not trouble you too much.”

“He died on the 5th of December, in one of the little villages of the Vosges, near Belfort,” I answered.

“How did it happen?” he asked. “Did he fall in battle?”

“No,” I said. “In October he came with his regiment to our village, and with some

of his men was quartered at our house. We—that is, my father and I—found in him no enemy, but a friend; and he stayed a week with us. Three weeks afterward, going through the woods just outside of our village, he was shot. They carried him to our house, and he died there a few weeks later. If you knew him, you know what his end was. His grave is in the cemetery at home, near the graves of my parents.”

“And do you know his relatives?” he asked. “He has a mother and a sister.”

“He has a sister—he *had* a mother,” I answered.

“What! do you mean his mother is dead too?” he exclaimed.

“Yes; the Lord spared her the pain of losing her son. She died just a little while before him.”

“And both are dead?” he said, sadly; and then, in a whisper, “Mother and brother

have left you. Oh, my poor, poor Thekla."

"You are Karl Erhardt, then?" I cried.

He looked at me in astonishment:

"Yes; that is my name. Did you hear it from my poor friend?"

"From him, and from Thekla also," I answered.

"From Thekla? What! you know her? Oh, do tell me about her. I have heard nothing for two months."

"I have not heard very lately," I answered, "but in her last letter she said she was well, but seemed to be still grieving over the loss of her two loved ones. I have written to her two or three times since then, but have received no answer—no doubt because I have led such a wandering life lately."

"You have given yourself early to the task of nursing the sick," he said. "How long have you been engaged in it?"

"Since December," I answered.

"You said you have a father: how could he let you sacrifice yourself so?"

"I have no longer a father or a home. My father died some weeks before the death of your friend, and of my home there is nothing left but a heap of ashes."

"Poor child!" he said. "Now I understand your sympathy with others. Pardon me that I have unconsciously turned your thoughts into such a sad direction. But I can see you have overworked yourself; you are attempting too much. Why do you not go to Thekla von Wertheim? I know she would be delighted to have you."

But I could not wait to talk longer. Too much time had been spent already; so I rose, taking my little basket, filled with medicine for the sick, and with wine and jelly for the convalescent. But a sudden thought struck me, and, acting on it, I took from my

pocket Thekla's last letter and gave it to him. I knew it would tell him all he needed to know, and would save my going again through those sad scenes with him. I walked down the room, past the long rows of beds, mechanically fulfilling my duties. Never had I felt so physically incapable of performing them.

When I came back to my new acquaintance, he stretched out his hand to me and said kindly,

"I know it all now, and you must give me a brother's right to take care of you. And the first thing will be to give up your work here. I can see that you are injuring your health. In a few days I hope to be able to start for home; you will go with me and give Thekla an unexpected pleasure?"

I could not speak. How wonderfully the Lord had arranged everything for me! Just when I most needed friends he sent them.

The remainder of this day so important to me I passed at the bedside of the dying soldier of whom I have spoken; in the presence of death I forgot my fatigue. Shortly before midnight, with words of peace and trust on his lips, he breathed his last, and one more name was added to the list of those who had given their lives for their country.

Then I left the hospital. My strength was utterly exhausted; the unexpected meeting with Thekla's friend had affected me greatly. I remember how the doctor laid his hand on my shoulder and looked at me gravely, but I recollect no more; for several hours I lay in a death-like swoon, so that those around me feared life would never return.

When I opened my eyes again, it was evident to me that my work in the hospital—for the present, at least—was ended. I was

not really sick, only my strength was gone ; so, when Colonel Erhardt started on his journey home, I accepted his kind invitation and left France with him.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

THE journey now seems to me like a dream. A mail-train soon brought us over the border into Germany, but I was too tired and exhausted to think of what was going on around me. The first night we stopped at the house of a relative of Colonel Erhardt; kind hands cared for me and did all possible for my comfort. All else in my memory is a blank page.

At last we reached the end of our journey. Colonel Erhardt had written nothing to Thekla of our coming, for letters were easily lost in those days, but by a comrade who was going home he had sent word that he had been hindered by a slight wound,

but would come home in two weeks at the latest.

It was a clear, cold, sunny March day when we reached our destination. We left the cars and took an open carriage for the few miles yet before us. As for me, I was too tired to feel any excitement about the meeting; but the face of my companion was beaming with joy and expectation. As we came near the place where his youth had been spent, he received a hearty welcome from almost every one we met.

But, though he was glad to greet familiar faces once more, Thekla had the first place in his thoughts, and we drove on quickly until we stopped before the door of a handsome country-house: we had reached our journey's end. The old servant who opened the door for us recognized my companion immediately, but the smile with which he greeted him changed quickly to a look of

sadness; over the joyous countenance of Colonel Erhardt, too, there fell a shadow as silently he shook hands with the old man. Then he said,

“How is your young mistress, Franz? Is she well?”

“Very well in body, sir,” he answered, with a sigh. “I hope your coming, sir, will cheer her up?”

“Where will I find her? In her room? Wait, Franz; stay here: I will announce myself.—Come, Miss Lèonie.” He took my hand and led me up the broad stone steps. I thought it so kind in him not to forget me in the moment of his happiness.

As I came into the wide hall adorned with antlers, the description I had received came back to me. How like it all now appeared!

Silently I followed my guide through several rooms. At last we stood before a large

heavy door; pushing it open noiselessly, we entered a beautiful room. My first glance fell on a lovely girl dressed in mourning; she was sitting by the window, and the setting sun threw its beams upon her, bringing out every lineament of that sweet face. I recognized her at first sight: in her looks and manner she was like her brother; but the joyousness of which I had heard so much was all gone now. Her cheeks had lost their bright color, her eyes showed she had been weeping, and the mouth had a very sorrowful droop.

She had not heard the quiet opening of the door, and for a minute we watched her in silence. Then my companion stepped forward and called her name softly. She turned with a cry of joy, and in an instant was in his arms.

It was certainly excusable that in the first joy of meeting everything else should be

forgotten. I leaned against a high chair and with a beating heart waited for them to speak to me.

Suddenly Thekla turned and saw me.

“But, Karl,” she cried, “who is this young lady? Oh, I know: it must be my poor dear Lèonie;” and she ran over to me and clasped me in her arms. How dear she has been to me ever since that minute! Our hearts were united then by a bond that has never loosened.

It was long before I regained my wonted strength and elasticity. Not only Thekla, but the whole household, treated me with such tenderness and attention that at times I forgot the bitter experiences of the past. Their efforts were gradually rewarded, for my strength began to revive and my spirits to return. In Thekla I found a true friend. She understood my grief; she sympathized with me. Certainly sorrow loses its sharp-

est sting when one can share it with another.

Three months after my coming Thekla was married. Her husband left the army and devoted himself to the care of his estates. Both treated me as one of themselves; I felt perfectly at home with them.

As I became stronger I begged, as a special favor, to be allowed to visit a hospital in the town. Here were still to be seen traces of the war. At first the physicians objected, on account of my youth, but, to my gratification, they consented to try me.

Thekla often scolded me gently when I went home tired and worn out; but I told her in reply that as it was her duty to occupy herself with her house, so was it mine to devote myself to the work to which God had called. And when I assured her that I thought myself happy to be able to speak words of comfort to the sick and the dying,

then she pressed me to her heart and accompanied me now and then—to share with me, she said, the joy of doing good.

But one day I told her my intention, when I grew older, to be a regular nurse. How she objected to it! and her husband also told me I must never think of such a thing. I kept silent after that, but was none the less determined, if opportunity offered, to carry out my purpose.

So passed a year. Thekla was now the happy mother of a darling boy, but before the new-comer was more than a month old, Thekla herself was taken very ill. For a time we feared we must lose her, but the Lord heard our prayers and spared our dear one to us. I had, of course, given up my visits to the hospital while I was needed at home; and, as the young mother's recovery was very slow, the little Karl demanded more and more of my attention. He grew very

fast, and soon learned to know me and to smile at my coming.

I had been made happy, too, by two letters from my old home. One was from Père Fontaine. The old priest wrote very kindly, deeply lamenting the change the war had made in our little village. He told me that the ruins had been already cleared away and that new houses were going up, but that he did not expect to live to see all the traces of that sad struggle wiped away. His presentiment was fulfilled: a month later he died, deeply regretted by the people among whom he had lived.

The other letter was from Stephen. He had, as we knew, been living with some relatives of his mother, and had been studying hard. How glad I was to learn that he had taken Jesus for his Master and promised to devote his life to his Lord's service! He had given up his first purpose—that of being

a lawyer—and had begun the study of medicine, in order, as he said, to be able to help the poor and the sick. He wrote me, too, that his uncle had begun to rebuild on the ruins of my old home for me; but my joy over his conversion was too great to allow me to think of anything else.

One year after another slipped away. Little Karl had become the darling of the whole house; he not only grew in stature, but his intellect developed wonderfully. How proud I was to hear him call me his “best Aunt Lèonie”!

My life now, in comparison with my early days, passed in quiet, untroubled joy, and I would have almost forgotten my old home if it had not been for the correspondence which I had kept up with Stephen all these years. He had made great progress in his studies, and passed a brilliant examination.

Six years had elapsed since the close of

the war, when Colonel Erhardt received a note from Stephen's uncle begging him to go to my native village and consult with him about the disposition of my property. How homesick I felt when he left! I so longed to go with him and see my dear old home! It was the first time I had ever felt a desire to go back. But it was too late in the year to travel comfortably; and, as Thekla and I were promised we should both go the next summer, I was obliged to be content.

He was gone but eight days, and returned accompanied, to our great surprise and pleasure, by Stephen. What a meeting after so many years! The first sight of him brought back all the sad memories, but joy soon triumphed, and his stay with us was a time of unalloyed happiness. He was no longer the careless, impetuous boy, but a grave, earnest young man. Those days of trial had given him a strength of character which

otherwise he might have lacked. He told me that Dr. Duprat, on account of his age, was intending to give up practice and wished Stephen to take his place; so he had bought a house in the village and intended to commence practising on his return.

“It is a lovely house, Lèonie,” he said, with an odd smile on his face. “It is built after the style of our old home, and the arrangement of the interior is wonderfully like it, too.”

Perhaps he saw the shadow his words caused, for he stopped suddenly and began to talk of other things. He stayed a week with us—a week full of happy hours—and I felt a void in my life when he was gone.

The winter and spring passed uneventfully. My longing to see my old home was stronger than ever, and, as the time passed and summer drew near, I felt as if I could not wait. At last the longed-for day arrived. Early in

the morning we took our way to the station. Little Karl was delighted at this his first journey into the wide world, and his expressions of astonishment as he saw the houses, trees and fields fly past him were very amusing.

How my heart throbbed with expectation as I realized that I was really on my way to my old home! We stayed all night at Strasburg, where thousands were busy with the repairs and enlarging of the fort. The next morning we started again, and in the afternoon reached Belfort, where we left the cars and took a carriage for the rest of the journey.

Little Karl was the only merry one of the party, we elders looking sadly out over the scenery. I pointed out to Thekla the spot where her brother had been shot, and covered my face with my hands to hide the tears, while hers flowed without restraint. Soon

we drove over the Arle bridge, and in half an hour more the little village lay at our feet.

I was rather curious as to where we were going to stay. I looked at Colonel Erhardt, but he only smiled and bade the driver turn into the street that led to where my old home used to stand. My heart beat quickly; I longed yet dreaded to see the ruins of the place where I had been so happy and met so much trouble. Absorbed in these thoughts, I did not notice the many new buildings that had gone up in the village.

At last the horses stopped; but what a sight presented itself before my astonished eyes! Instead of the desolation I had left rose a magnificent building after the style of the old castle. The gates opened silently and mysteriously at our approach, and we entered a large courtyard. The old fountain played once more, its water glistening in the

sun, and hid from me at first some one who was standing behind it, until I heard a voice say,

“Welcome, Mademoiselle Lèonie, to your new home!”

I immediately recognized Dr. Duprat, and behind him I saw Stephen’s happy face. It seemed to me I was in a dream from which I would soon waken.

They led me into the house—I hardly know how—and after a while, when alone with Thekla, I begged her for an explanation.

“Why, Lèonie,” she said, “you are to look upon this house as a slight payment for a great debt, and as the thank-offering of a loving friend for the sacrificing love you showed in those dreadful days to my husband and brother. This is your own, free of all encumbrance, and I hear your father’s property is large; so you will be able to

live a life free from care. My only fear is that you will slip away from us, for Stephen—”

A knock at the door interrupted us, and I ran away to hide my blushing face and to think over what I had just heard. What had I done to deserve such goodness? Nothing. It was their love for me that had magnified my little acts of common humanity; and I remembered it was God who had put it into their hearts to be so good to me, and resolved that my future life should show my gratitude to him and to them.

More than three years have passed since that day when I first crossed the threshold of my new home. Two years ago I came here for the second time, to spend, if the Lord will, my days in my native land. We did not make a long stay that first time, and when we went back Stephen went with us. We were married in Thekla's home, and our

life since has been very happy. My little Thekla, who is just a year old to-day, makes sweet music in our home.

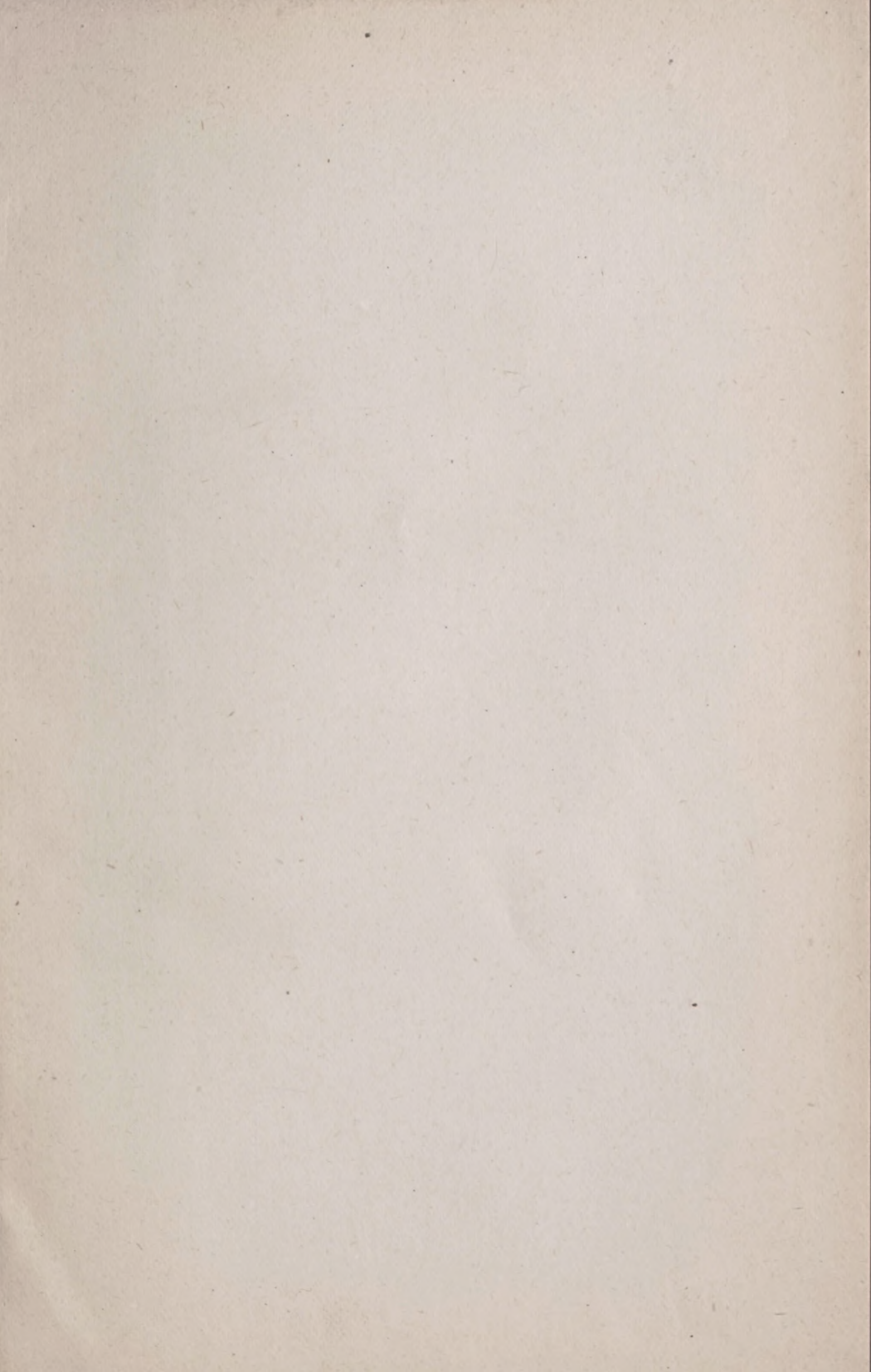
Our friends in Germany write often, and have promised to make us a visit next month. My husband—the only physician in the neighborhood—has a very large practice, and has many opportunities of seeing life on its dark side. I often accompany him to the cottages of the poor and the sick, where my basket is always welcome; and I try to talk of Jesus to the people, but they are so ignorant and superstitious that only now and then is a heart opened to listen. However, I continue to sow and to plant in the hope that in heaven I may find unexpected fruit.

My story is ended. I have tried to show how, out of darkness and through darkness, light came into my soul. I would not at any price exchange my thorny way, bright-

ened by this light, for the pleasant path that is lighted only by earthly happiness. On this path I learned to know Jesus; to him alone belongs my praise, my worship, who healed the broken heart of my mother, who led my father into the clear, cloudless light of his presence, who showed himself to Barbara as the Good Shepherd of his flock.

Yes, I praise him who has led me and mine to himself, and, whatever the future may bring, he will never leave us until he calls us to himself, where all tears shall be wiped away. To him be the honor, the glory and the adoration. Amen!

THE END.



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